

Same food allergy risk, different wording

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New research shows the wording of warning labels may lead to different perceptions of risk for the same danger.

A team of researchers from Victoria University, the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute and the Royal Children's Hospital surveyed 250 parents of children with a history of anaphylaxis and found parents displayed different levels of caution with foods depending on the wording of the label, regardless of actual risk levels.

Lead author of the study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, Victoria University PhD researcher Giovanni Zurzolo, said 65% of parents ignored labels warning food was 'made in the same factory' as [allergenic foods](#). However, only 22% of parents ignored labels warning that traces of allergens 'may be present' in the product.

"Although these warnings may actually represent the same or similar levels of risk, consumers perceived different risk based on the different wording of precautionary [labels](#)," Mr Zurzolo said.

He said this evidence of statements being disregarded by many parents of food-[allergic children](#), including those caring for children with a past history of anaphylaxis, was concerning and highlighted inadequacies in food labeling legislation.

"Policies that promote greater clarity and consistent use of precautionary statements may help to deal with this complacency," he said.

Lead researcher and Director of Population Health at Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, Professor Katie Allen, said the issue affected the whole community since we are all food consumers.

"Ultimately we need to balance issues of safety for those who are exquisitely sensitive to food allergens with the requirement for [food](#) to be cost-effectively produced," she said.

Giovanni Zurzolo's PhD research is being supervised by Victoria University's Associate Professor Michael Mathai and Murdoch Childrens Research Institute's Professor Katie Allen and Dr Jennifer Koplin.

Provided by Victoria University

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