

# Almost half of food allergies in adults appear in adulthood

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When people think of food allergies, it's mostly in relation to children. New late-breaking research being presented at the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) Annual Scientific Meeting shows that almost half of all food-allergic adults surveyed reported one or more adult-onset food allergies.

"Food allergies are often seen as a condition that begins in childhood, so the idea that 45 percent of [adults](#) with food allergies develop them in adulthood is surprising," says Ruchi Gupta, MD, MPH, ACAAI member and lead author of the study. "We also saw that, as with children, the incidence of food allergies in adults is rising across all ethnic groups."

The most common food allergy among adults is shellfish, affecting an estimated 3.6 percent of U.S. adults. This marks a 44 percent increase from the 2.5 percent prevalence rate published in an influential 2004 study. Similarly, these new data suggest that adult tree nut allergy prevalence has risen to 1.8 percent from a 2008 estimate of .5 percent, an increase of 260 percent.

"Our research also found that, among black, Asian and Hispanic adults, the risk of developing a food allergy to certain foods is higher than for whites, specifically for shellfish and peanuts," says food allergy researcher Christopher Warren, PhD candidate and study co-author.

"For example, Asian adults were 2.1 times more likely to report a shellfish allergy than white adults, and Hispanic adults reported a [peanut allergy](#) at 2.3 times the frequency of white adults. Because many adults

believe food allergies mostly affect children, they may not think to get tested. It is important to see an allergist for testing and diagnosis if you are having a reaction to a food and suspect a food allergy."

People may not recognize they have a [food allergy](#), and believe their reaction is a [food](#) intolerance. They might not seek the help of an allergist for diagnosis, but allergists are specially trained to administer [allergy](#) testing and diagnose the results. Allergists can tailor a plan specific to your allergies. To find an allergist near you, use the ACAAI allergist locator.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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