

New estimates of food allergy prevalence in Canada

HAMILTON, ON (29 October 2015)

One in 13 Canadians, or 2.5 million people, are affected by a food allergy, according to new prevalence estimates from the Allergy, Genes and Environment Network (AllerGen). The research represents the largest survey to date on the prevalence of food allergies in Canada, and will be used as a baseline to gauge if allergies are rising or falling.

[The research](#), published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology: In Practice*, found that 7.5 per cent of Canadians—7.7 per cent of adults and 6.9 per cent of children under 18 years of age—self-report having at least one food allergy.

The estimates are calculated from the nationwide SPACE survey (*Surveying Prevalence of food Allergy in All Canadian Environments*), which surveyed 5,734 households, representing over 15,000 individuals, about food allergies. The findings provide data on how many Canadians are affected by food allergies, with particular attention to the nine foods most commonly associated with allergies: peanut, tree nut, fish, shellfish, sesame, milk, egg, wheat and soy.

The research was conducted by a team of AllerGen investigators in partnership with Health Canada, and co-led by Ann Clarke, a professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Calgary, and Susan Elliott, a professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Management at the University of Waterloo. AllerGen trainee Lianne Soller was first author of the paper.

“Approximately 7.5 per cent of Canadians report having food allergies, confirming estimates from our previous national survey conducted in 2008-09,” says Clarke. “These findings will provide a benchmark for comparison with the next AllerGen-funded survey of Canadian households, which will be launched in October 2015.”

“Although our research has provided a view of the food allergy landscape in Canada, it is merely a glimpse—a snapshot in time,” adds Elliott. “This next survey will help us to answer the questions: ‘Is food allergy on the rise?’ and ‘How are the prevalence, perception and experience of food allergy in Canada changing over time?’”

About AllerGen NCE

[AllerGen NCE Inc.](#), the Allergy, Genes and Environment Network (est. 2004), is a national research network dedicated to improving the quality of life of people suffering from allergic and related immune diseases. Funded by Industry Canada through the federal Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program, the Network is hosted at McMaster University in Hamilton. Visit www.allergen-nce.ca for more information.

About the University of Calgary

The University of Calgary is a leading Canadian university located in the nation's most enterprising city. The university has a clear strategic direction – “Eyes High” – to become one of Canada's top five research universities by 2016, grounded in innovative learning and teaching and fully integrated with the community of Calgary. For more information, visit ucalgary.ca.

About the University of Waterloo

In just half a century, the University of Waterloo, located at the heart of Canada's technology hub, has become one of Canada's leading comprehensive universities with 35,000 full- and part-time students in undergraduate and graduate programs. Waterloo, as home to the world's largest post-secondary co-operative education program, embraces its connections to the world and encourages enterprising partnerships in learning, research and discovery. In the next decade, the university is committed to building a better future for Canada and the world by championing innovation and collaboration to create solutions relevant to the needs of today and tomorrow. For more information about Waterloo, visit www.uwaterloo.ca.

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