



## Psychosocial Factors Impacting Food Allergic Families

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- **Masters in Marriage & Family Therapy**
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  - The Food Allergy Counselor Directory
  - Exploring Food Allergy Families podcast
  - Food allergy-specific therapy worksheets & resources
  - Allergy psychosocial & QoL content
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## Disclosures

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**I have the following relevant financial relationships to disclose:**

- Speaker for one ThermoFisher (Allergy Insider) panel discussion on Emotional Aspects of Allergy Testing in 2022

**I will not discuss off-label use or investigational use in my presentation**



## Common Psychosocial Impacts

**Children & parents report:**

- Increased stress related to daily burden of food allergy management
- Mothers of food allergic children experience increased anxiety & stress compared to mothers of children without chronic illness
- Increased anxiety which can lead to avoidance & social isolation
- Decreased quality of life (QoL), especially regarding social activities and dietary restrictions and limitations, especially outside of the home



Warren, Christopher & Otto, Alana & Walker, Madeline & Gupta, Ruchi. (2016). Quality of Life Among Food Allergic Patients and Their Caregivers. *Current Allergy and Asthma Reports*. 16. 10.1007/s11882-016-0614-9.

Liu, G-Y, Patel, N, Umasunthar, T, Gore, C, Warner, JO, Hanna, H, Phillips, K, Mohd Zaki, A, Hodes, M, Boyle, RJ. Anxiety and stress in mothers of food-allergic children. *Pediatric Allergy Immunology* 2014; 25: 236- 242.



## Common Psychosocial Factors

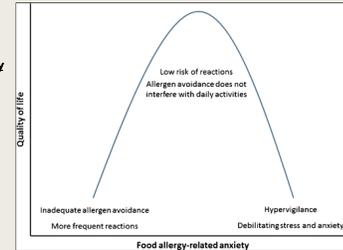
- Risk tolerance levels
- Risk perception (actual versus perceived)
- Child's age and stage of development
- Parental overprotectiveness levels
- Trust in others ability to keep child safe
- Child's level of allergy management self-efficacy
- Feeling invalidated for their food allergy concerns
- Lack of allergy support from family and community
- Life transitions (ie. moving, school promotions)
- Lack of affordability/access to safe foods & medication
- Fear of bullying and/or exclusions due to food allergy
- Previous food allergy-related trauma & reaction history



## Food Allergy Anxiety & Quality of Life Factors

**Families with an inadequate allergen avoidance approach may present with:**

- No epinephrine for school
- Lack of focus on safety
- Student may lack age-appropriate allergy management skills due to it not being a priority for the family



**Families with a hypervigilant allergy approach may present with:**

- Rigid approach to safety
- Regular reassurance-seeking
- Frequent communication
- Student may lack age-appropriate allergy management skills due to parental overprotection

Warren, Christopher & Otto, Alana & Wallace, Madeline & Gupta, Ruchi. (2016). Quality of Life Among Food Allergic Patients and Their Caregivers. *Current Allergy and Asthma Reports*. 16. 10.1007/s11882-016-0614-9.



## Food Allergy-Related Bullying

- Bullying, teasing, and harassment of children with food allergy seems to be common, frequent, and repetitive
- Allergy-related bullying rates are possibly double the rates noted in the general population
- Most common site of occurrence was at school (82.4%)
- Most common nonphysical act was verbal teasing or taunting
- Most common physical act was having the allergen waved in the face
- Perpetrators sometimes include adults (ie. highlighting the student as the reason for restrictions)



Jay A. Lieberman, Christopher Weiss, Terence J. Furlong, Malli Sicheimer, Scott H. Sicheimer. Bullying among pediatric patients with food allergy. *Annals of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology*, Volume 105, Issue 4, 2010, Pages 282-286.

## Helpful Approaches with Food Allergic Parents

- Evaluate food allergy management factors and approaches for each student/family
- Ask open-ended questions to gain insights into anxiety triggers impacting workability
- Utilize emotionally-validating language to help parents feel heard and understood
- Provide details on your school's food allergy management procedures and how various anxiety-provoking scenarios will be handled





### Food Allergy Empathy-Building Exercise

- To gain insight into the emotional experience of living with a food allergy, eliminate one or more of the top 9 allergens from your diet for a day or more
- Imagine how it feels to navigate daily life with these dietary limitations, restrictions, and the fear of potentially life-threatening reactions with mistakes

- milk
- eggs
- peanuts
- tree nuts
- fish
- shellfish
- wheat
- soy
- sesame



### Useful Food Allergy Resources

**Psychosocial & Navigating Life with Food Allergy:**

- **The Food Allergy Counselor website**  
([www.FoodAllergyCounselor.com](http://www.FoodAllergyCounselor.com))
- **FARE – Food Allergy Research & Education**  
([www.FoodAllergy.org](http://www.FoodAllergy.org))
- **Allergic Living Magazine**  
([www.AllergicLiving.com](http://www.AllergicLiving.com))

**Food Allergy & Allergic Disease Information:**

- **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology**  
([www.AAAAI.org](http://www.AAAAI.org))
- **American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology**  
([www.ACAAI.org](http://www.ACAAI.org))

