



## Australia tops the list of food allergy hypochondriacs

Australia has claimed top spot on the list of countries whose citizens believe they have a food allergy, delegates at the Australasian College of Dermatologists' Annual Scientific Meeting have heard.

More than one in ten Australian adults claim to suffer from some sort of food allergy, however according to Professor Connie Katelaris, Professor of Immunology & Allergy at Campbelltown Hospital, this perception far outweighs the reality.

"In actual fact, only one to two per cent of adults have a true allergy to food. What's more, these imagined food allergies are far more likely to be reported by women than by men", says Professor Katelaris.

"There are several theories as to why adults continue to have these perceived food allergies. An individual often feels that they have control over their symptoms if they blame food. Believing that symptoms are caused by a food allergy means that there is an understandable cause. Food allergy is a diagnosis favoured by alternative practitioners, despite the lack of evidence showing that it is to blame."

"While food allergy is prevalent in children, the majority grow out of their allergies by adulthood. About 97% of those who had an allergy to dairy as children are no longer allergic as adults, while two-thirds of children grow out of their egg allergy and 20% grow out of their allergy to peanuts".

Honorary Secretary of the Australasian College of Dermatologists, Dr Stephen Shumack, concurs most rashes seen by dermatologists in Australia are not caused by food allergies.

"We would see many rashes a day in our practices, and rarely see any related to food allergies," says Dr Shumack.

"Most would be caused by a range of conditions including eczema and psoriasis."

22 May 2008

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