

For immediate release
14 May 2010

Australians more alert to rise in food allergy

The last decade has seen a rapid rise in the number of Australians suffering from potentially life threatening food allergies, now estimated to affect approximately six per cent of children and two per cent of adults.

The largest increase in food allergy is amongst Australian children under the age of five years, with up to five per cent developing a food allergy by school age.

According to Anaphylaxis Australia it is estimated that peanut allergy affects two to three per cent of children by school age, which for 80 per cent will remain a lifelong problem.

Australia Medic Alert Foundation chief executive officer, Sandra Turner, said that the Foundation's membership reflects this rise in allergies, particularly amongst children.

"In 2009 almost 13 per cent of all new MedicAlert® members nationally were children aged 12 years and under – many due to food allergy," Ms Turner said.

"It can be difficult for parents to cope with managing a severe allergy in young children; however, there are practical solutions to reduce the risk of living with allergies."

During Food Allergy Awareness Week (May 16-22), MedicAlert® reminds all Australians that quick action is vital in treating the potentially life threatening severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) that can result from food allergy.

"Almost 150,000 Australians currently benefit from the MedicAlert® system and we continue to urge all people with hidden medical conditions like food allergy to consider taking advantage of the 24-hour protection it offers," Ms Turner said.

Anaphylaxis Australia advises that all people who are at risk of anaphylaxis have a sound action plan and carry their adrenaline auto-injector at all times. They also recommend people at risk wear medical identification in case they are not with people who know of their condition and know what to do in an emergency.

"The MedicAlert® emblem worn around the neck or wrist is widely recognised by emergency personnel and other health care professionals who can immediately check for important medical conditions or allergies, a personal ID number and the 24-hour emergency number engraved on the emblem," Ms Turner said.

"It is important that young people with allergies are not excluded from activities and have the freedom to live life as normally as possible. Wearing a MedicAlert® emblem as part of Australia Medic Alert Foundation membership brings peace of mind to both the sufferer and their family, particularly as they become more independent at school, playing sport and socially," she said.

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For more information or for comment, please contact:

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Australia Medic Alert Foundation is a non-profit organisation serving Australians since 1971 by providing a 24-hour personal medical emergency information and identification system. The authentic MedicAlert® emblem is instantly recognised by medical personnel in many countries and provides immediate access to important medical information that can be vital in an emergency.

Australia Medic Alert Foundation

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