



PRESS RELEASE

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The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) launches the Food Allergy Campaign

Allergies become epidemic: Food allergy sufferers double in the last 10 years

- **Life-threatening allergic reactions in children, such as anaphylaxis, increased 7-fold in the last decade**
- **A third of all allergic shocks in children occur for the first time at school with teachers largely unprepared**
- **“International Minimum Standards for the Allergic Child at School” document pushes for minimum requirements for the safety of allergic children at school**
- **Most common food allergies in children are egg, cow’s milk and nuts**
- **EAACI will work throughout 2012-2013 to establish the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Guidelines for General Practitioners, Allergy Specialists, Food Industry as well as Primary Care workers and Community reference bodies**

Zurich (Switzerland) 18.06.2012 – Today the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI) launched its Food Allergy Campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness of the sharp increase of anaphylaxis in children, an allergic reaction that is severe and potentially life-threatening. It aims at educating the public to recognise the symptoms and its triggers, and to teach methods of how to react in case of emergency, e.g. by using an adrenaline pen.

“The first element of this campaign is the launch of the **International Minimum Standards for the Allergic Child at School** document that establishes minimum requirements for the safety of allergic children at school. A third of all life-threatening allergic reactions occur at school where children are exposed to an environment of new foods and are at risk of coming into contact with trigger foods. We plan to have the standards established and the patient version of the **International Minimum Standards for the Allergic Child at School** document ready for publication in the next few months”, announced Prof Cezmi Akdis, EAACI President.

More than 17 million people in Europe suffer from food allergies, with 3.5 million younger than 25 years. The sharpest increase is seen in children and young people, especially in the number of life-threatening allergic reactions in children. The number of hospital admissions for severe allergic reactions in children increased 7-fold in the last 10 years.

In continental Europe the most common food allergy in children is to egg, cow’s milk and tree-nuts, while in adulthood it is to fresh fruit, nuts and vegetables. In the UK, walnuts, hazelnuts and peanuts pose the biggest threat and cause 50% of all life-threatening allergic reactions.

Allergy to shellfish and cod prevails in Scandinavia and Northern Europe. Across Europe, food allergy is the leading cause of anaphylaxis in children aged 0-14.

Food Allergies vs. Food Intolerances

The campaign also aims to teach the differences between food intolerances and food allergies. Food intolerances do not directly involve the immune system. Therefore, it cannot be measured by allergy tests. Lactose intolerance is a non-allergic hypersensitivity and reactions to food additives are mostly non-allergic. In general, the

symptoms of non-allergic hypersensitivity are milder and therefore are rarely life-threatening reactions.

Aim is to improve food labelling and broaden access to anaphylaxis treatment

The EAACI Food Allergy Campaign is also going to engage with EU authorities to improve food labelling and to facilitate access to anaphylaxis emergency treatment.

Some foods have the label "May contain peanuts" or "May contain milk". This label is not regulated and is used by food manufacturers on their own initiative. But different producers use different criteria for using the "may contain" label. Therefore, the current "may contain" label represents different levels of contamination and hence different levels of risk.

Campaign roll out

The launch is being supported by an outdoor and online campaign, which will debut at the EAACI Congress 2012 in Geneva as well as online at www.stopanaphylaxis.com and will be rolled out throughout the year. One print ad features a child about to eat a piece of food, to highlight the fact that "Behind the sweet moments, his life might be in imminent danger". The ad includes an anaphylaxis test to quickly identify "if you or your loved ones are at risk". Campaign materials are available at www.stopanaphylaxis.com ready to download.

About the International Minimum Standards for the Allergic Child at School document

The **International Minimum Standards for the Allergic Child at School** document is aimed at harmonising the minimum requirements for the safety of an allergic child at school across the world. EAACI Task Forces on the Allergic Child at School and the Patient's Organisations Committee will champion it, in collaboration with The Educator's Association (ATEE).

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Guidelines

EAACI will work throughout the year 2012-2013 to establish comprehensive guidelines on Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis covering diagnosis, treatment, management in the community and prevention that embrace all the different stakeholders: Clinicians, Immunologists, Epidemiologists, Food Technologists, Food Industry Research Department Representatives, Regulatory Bodies, Allied Health Representatives, and Patient Organisations, among others.

About EAACI

The European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, EAACI, is a non-profit organisation active in the field of allergic and immunologic diseases such as asthma, rhinitis, eczema, occupational allergy, food and drug allergy and anaphylaxis. EAACI was founded in 1956 in Florence and has become the largest medical association in Europe in the field of allergy and clinical immunology. It includes over 7,400 members from 121 countries, as well as 42 National Allergy Societies. www.eaaci.org

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