

National Jewish Launches Study to Understand Food Allergy

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DENVER — Researchers at National Jewish Medical and Research Center are launching a comprehensive study of food allergy in children. Researchers hope the five-year study will help them predict which children will develop allergies and which children will outgrow them. It should also offer insights into what has caused the alarming rise in food allergies and possible ways to prevent or cure them.

“The prevalence of food allergy alone has doubled in the past decade,” said researcher Andy Liu, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at National Jewish. “Yet we know very little about the biological, genetic or environmental factors that cause food allergies to develop. This study will provide invaluable information about those factors and their role in food allergy.”

Researchers will enroll 400 infants ages 3 to 12 months of age with a milk and/or egg allergy. Approximately 20 percent of those children are expected to develop peanut allergy. Twenty-five to 50 percent are expected to outgrow the milk and egg allergies.

In partnership with the child’s family physician, the researchers will observe the children for five years, watching closely for the development of peanut allergy as well as the decline in milk, egg or peanut allergies. The researchers closely monitor food and other environmental exposures, and periodically take blood samples to better understand genetic and biological factors suspected in the development of food allergies.

“We have numerous suspects in the food allergy mystery,” said researcher [Donald Leung](#), MD, PhD, Head of Pediatric Allergy-Immunology at National Jewish. “This study will give us a chance to evaluate the potential candidates. In time, we believe that information will lead to treatments and cures for food allergy.”

An estimated 11 million people in the United States have food allergies, and an estimated 150 people in the United States die each year from allergic reactions to food. Peanut allergy causes the most concern because it causes severe reactions more often than other foods, accounting for an estimated 15,000 emergency room visits each year.

The study is funded by the [National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#) (NIAID), and is the first in a series of food allergy studies that will be conducted by the Consortium of Food Allergy Research. In 2005, the NIAID awarded a \$17 million grant to the consortium to develop therapies to treat and prevent food allergy. Other institutions in the consortium are Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, the University of Arkansas Children’s Hospital Research Institute, Duke University School of Medicine, and Yale University School of Medicine.

National Jewish Health is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 124 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit the [media resources page](#).

Media Contacts

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