

# national allergy strategy

## World-first national health campaign to help parents prevent food allergies

- World first national health campaign advises parents to introduce common allergy causing foods to babies before they turn one, to reduce food allergies
- Includes a new online resource [Nip Allergies in the Bub](#) that provides parents with a 'one-stop-shop' for the latest evidenced-based information
- In large published studies, researchers found that introducing smooth peanut butter/paste to babies between 4-11 months of age, reduced the rate of allergy by about 80 per cent
- Optimising eczema management is also important, as babies with eczema may develop food allergies after exposure to foods through their skin

As part of the National Allergy Strategy, Australia's leading allergy organisations have today launched the ***Nip Allergies in the Bub*** Food Allergy Prevention Project - a world first national health campaign to educate parents on how to prevent food allergies, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health. It includes the ***Nip Allergies in the Bub*** website, that outlines the most up-to-date recommendations for introducing common food allergens to babies.

"We know that parents, understandably, can be extremely apprehensive about introducing common foods associated with allergies to their babies, but doing so to avoid development of food allergy can actually prevent a lifetime of added stress around leaving children at day-care or school, eating out, assessing allergic reactions for severity, and constant vigilance," said Maria Said, Co-Chair of the National Allergy Strategy and CEO of Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA).

"The Nip Allergies in the Bub website provides a one-stop-shop for parents explaining what foods to introduce when, how to introduce them and how to recognise if their baby has an allergic reaction," explained Ms Said. "While some babies will still develop a food allergy despite early introduction of common food allergens, this number will be greatly reduced."

"Australia has the highest rate of allergies in the world, with around 20 per cent of the population affected, and the prevalence of food allergies continues to rise" explained Dr Preeti Joshi, consultant specialist in Paediatric Allergy and Immunology.

"In the past, the advice has been to delay the introduction of common food allergens, such as peanuts, cow's milk, eggs, wheat, soy, shellfish and fish, particularly in babies with a family history of allergies or other risk factors. However, the most recent evidence tells us that we actually need to be introducing these foods before the age of one to prevent allergies from developing. One study found that introducing peanuts between 4-11 months of age can reduce peanut allergy in high risk babies by about 80 per cent."

### Key recommendations:

- Introduce a variety of solid foods once your baby shows interest (around 6 months of age, but not before 4 months).
- Introduce smooth peanut butter/paste and cooked egg in the first year of life, regardless of any allergy risk factors.
- Hydrolysed (partially or extensively) formula (i.e. those labelled hypoallergenic or 'HA') is no longer recommended to prevent allergies.

- There is no evidence that soy or goat's milk formula reduces the risk of allergic disease.

Recently named a finalist in the 2019 Australian Web Awards, the Nip Allergies in the Bub website also offers detailed information about managing eczema, which affects one in five babies under two years of age and can be a risk factor for developing food allergies.

"Babies with eczema have a higher chance of developing a food allergy, perhaps as a result of food allergens coming into contact with their skin" continued Dr Joshi. "Eczema-affected skin is compromised – meaning it doesn't work as effectively as a barrier – so managing eczema well in babies, if it is diagnosed, can improve the performance of that skin barrier, and may reduce the risk of food allergies developing."

#### **Tips for managing eczema**

- Moisturise your baby at least twice daily
- Avoid bubble bath, soap or products containing perfume/fragrance
- Avoid overheating
- Use prescribed creams or ointments as directed by a doctor or health care professional.

The Nip Allergies in the Bub Food Allergy Prevention Project is an attempt to improve quality of life and relieve the burden of food allergies on Australians and the healthcare system. It is being rolled out nationally after a successful pilot in Western Australia (WA), also funded by the Australian Government. In addition to the website, the project includes:

- Downloadable info sheets, videos and recipes for parents
- Smart Start Allergy, an SMS program to raise awareness about introducing the common food allergens to babies as well as gathering information about possible allergic reactions
- Online training, podcasts, clinical updates for health professionals
- A 1300 support line for parents and health professionals needing more information (1300 66 13 12)
- A widespread social media strategy to both parents and health professionals to actively promote the key messages and the website.

"Our goal is to allay fears and build confidence in the general community by giving practical advice based on the latest evidence. With this innovative approach, we give parents with babies at increased risk of food allergy the tools to safely introduce foods on their own. During the piloting of the project in WA, we have monitored infant anaphylaxis in the community and there does not appear to have been an increase in anaphylaxis. This has given us the confidence to roll out the project nationally," says Dr Joshi.

"Other countries have been keenly watching what we have been doing. Whilst the guidelines in other countries are consistent with our approach, Australia is the first to take a public health approach to implementing the guidelines. Australia is leading the world in this area" finished Dr Joshi.

More information available at: [www.preventallergies.org.au](http://www.preventallergies.org.au)

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## About the National Allergy Strategy

The National Allergy Strategy aims to improve the health and quality of life of Australians with allergic diseases and minimise the burden of allergic diseases on individuals, carers, healthcare services and the community.

The National Allergy Strategy is a partnership led by the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) and Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, the leading medical and patient organisations for allergy in Australia. [www.nationalallergystrategy.org.au](http://www.nationalallergystrategy.org.au)

- ASCIA: [www.allergy.org.au](http://www.allergy.org.au)
- Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia: [www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au)

## Background Information

- Food allergy induced anaphylaxis has doubled in the last 10 years [1].
- One in 10 infants now have a food allergy [2] and 1 in 20 children aged 10-14 years of age have a food allergy [3].
- Hospital admissions for anaphylaxis have increased 5-fold in the last 20 years [1].
- Deaths from anaphylaxis in Australia have increased by 7% per year (1997-2013) [4].
- Those at risk of anaphylaxis live with the very real daily fear of a life-threatening severe allergic reaction. Individuals at risk of food allergy induced anaphylaxis and their carers have higher than average rates of anxiety [5,6].
- Around 4-8% children (0-5 years) [7], and 2-4% of adults [1] are affected by food allergy.
- Fatalities from food-induced anaphylaxis increase by around 10% each year [4].

## Use of the website - most accessed content (in order):

- Introducing solids
- What foods should I feed my baby
- Food ideas
- Eczema
- Health professional section
- Identifying allergic reaction
- Learning to eat

## Health professional education

Several health professional education resources have been developed and are available via the health professional section of the Nip allergies in the Bub website:

- Eczema e-training (154 registrations since July 2018)
- Food allergy prevention e-training (207 registrations since July 2018)
- Food allergy prevention education video (538 views since July 2018)
- Infant feeding and allergy prevention clinical update (266 downloads since August 2018)
- Face to face education session for Maternal Child Health Nurses in WA (Approx 150 participants)

## Comments about the website

### Consumers:

“Love the look and ease of use of the website. Very helpful and informative.”

“Great information! Easy to navigate site.”

“I appreciate the ideas of how to incorporate the allergy causing foods into meals I can offer my baby e.g. mixing with fruit puree etc.”

“Great website, important message, thanks.”

**Health professionals:**

“Excellent site. Love the video and would love to share it with my staff as a refresher on anaphylaxis and allergies as it is simple and short and sweet.”

“I am a child health nurse working in Perth. This is a fantastic website, well done! Will recommend to all clients.”

**References:**

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