More Children—Especially Black Kids—Have Food Allergies

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Many youngsters love peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and this quickie kid's meal is also a favorite to fix for busy parents. But new research showed that as many as one out of 12 kids may have a food allergy—and peanuts are a common culprit—according to a study recently published in the journal *Pediatrics* and reported by Reuters and Today Health.

For the study, researchers reviewed a nationally representative sample of nearly 40,000 online surveys filled out by the parents of children younger than 18. Parents answered questions about food allergies, and a panel of medical experts screened the responses. According to the study results, an estimated 6 million kids in the United States have some form of food allergy—significantly higher numbers than previously thought. What's more, scientists found that nearly 40 percent of these children experienced a severe reaction to certain foods. (Peanut allergies were the most common, followed by sensitivity to milk and shellfish.)

In addition, findings also revealed black and Asian families were more likely to have allergies and minority children were less likely to have their allergies diagnosed by doctors.

Currently, doctors aren't sure of the reason for these disparities. But some suggest this gap may be because minority and low-income kids have less access to medical care, or because parents are unfamiliar with food allergies.

"Some parents don't even tell me about a food allergy because they don't think a doctor can do anything," explained Ruchi S. Gupta, MD, a pediatrician and researcher at the Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, and the study's author. "They may just stay away from certain foods."

True, this approach may help kids avoid specific allergies they have. But experts also stress that more research needs to be done to determine not only why allergy disparities exist but also why this condition seems to be increasing among children.

To read more about different types of allergies, click here.

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