Allergy driving Aussies nuts

Australia has one of the highest incidences of food allergy in the developed world, and it is increasing at an alarming rate. One in 20 babies born in Australia today will develop a food allergy that could threaten their life every day.

This Food Allergy Week (13-19 May) we can help increase awareness of food allergy in an effort to promote understanding, and help to protect those at risk.

Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service dietitian Melissa De Vaney said: “A food allergy is simply the body reacting to a protein in food that the body thinks is harmful.

“Their immune system releases chemicals which can cause all sorts of adverse reactions like hives, vomiting, swelling or difficulty breathing. The worst cases can be life-threatening, Ms De Vaney said.

“There is no known cure for food allergy, education is the best way to remain safe. Not just education for the person suffering and their family, but also the general public.

“We should all understand the seriousness of allergy, know what the signs look like and how to respond in an emergency situation.

“A quick reaction may save a life,” she said

Ninety per cent of allergic reactions in Australia are triggered by cow’s milk, peanuts, tree nuts, seafood, sesame, soy, fish, gluten and wheat.

Phoebe Nance, whose son suffers from a severe nut allergy, said: “When you start educating yourself on where you might find triggers it opens up a Pandora’s Box, we now know BBQs can easily lead to cross-contamination, even from previous uses.

“We’ve also learnt that even if it is something you’ve eaten before you must read the product label every single time, recipes can change,” Ms Nance said.

“As food allergy is so common, I do think people are becoming more understanding and accommodating. It’s up to all of us to make others feel comfortable about putting their hands up if they need to avoid certain foods.

“With my son starting school this year it has been heart-warming to see the ownership his classmates and other parents take to make sure he is safe.”
Most importantly always have your Anaphylaxis/Allergic Reactions AND medication (if prescribed) easily accessible.

ENDS

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Media Opportunity:

Dietitian Melissa De Vaney, Phoebe Nance and her 5 year old son Diesel are available for interviews on request.