

Food Sensitive Study (Quality of Life) Wave 1 Report

Research programme: Behaviour and perception

Project status: Completed

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Conducted by: Aston university

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Background

We commissioned this survey to better understand how food allergies, intolerances and coeliac disease affect people across the UK, and the factors associated with higher or lower quality of life. It will also inform our ongoing work to monitor and evaluate the success of the FSA's food hypersensitivity programme.

The FSA will be running a second wave of the survey in autumn this year, and we will use this to observe any differences in the eating out and quality of life data collected across the two timepoints.

Approach

The data was collected through an online survey. Altogether over 2,000 participants living in the UK took part. Participants included:

- 1,019 adults with food hypersensitivities;
- 793 parents of children with food hypersensitivities;
- 267 children (aged 8 to 17 years) with food hypersensitivities.

A combination of bespoke questions and existing, validated question scales were used in the questionnaire. Validated scales were used to capture and measure food hypersensitivity-specific quality of life, as these questions have been tested and widely used in wider research to measure quality of life for individuals with these conditions.

The study collected data on a range of aspects related to managing food hypersensitivities. It explored:

Foods respondents react to including symptoms, diagnosis, medication and hospitalisation;

- Experiences when eating out;
- Experiences with shopping and food labels;
- Experiences of food hypersensitivity in social situations;
- Food hypersensitivity-specific quality of life.

Results

- All participants reported that their food hypersensitivity, or child's food hypersensitivity, impacted their lives 'quite a bit' to 'very much'.

- Severity of reactions was found to predict quality of life, with more severe reactions predicting poorer health-related quality of life of participants.
- Feeling more comfortable asking a member of staff for information about food when eating out was related to better quality of life in adult participants. Similarly, higher confidence that the information provided when eating out enables the identification of foods that cause a reaction, was related to better quality of life in adult participants
- The report also found out that a greater frequency with which participants reported checking information at various stages of eating out was related to poorer quality of life.
- This last finding is in keeping with the idea that 'checking behaviour' creates a greater burden on the individual or parent of a child with food hypersensitivity, and this has an impact on their quality of life.

Research report

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