

national allergy council



MEDIA RELEASE

One in 10 babies develop food allergies. New app helps parents put prevention advice into practice.

When Emma Williams' son reacted to egg at around seven months of age, introducing other foods suddenly felt much more daunting. Her son had eczema as a baby - a known risk factor for food allergy - and the reaction caused him to vomit two hours later, prompting Emma to call the allergy helpline for advice. The experience left her questioning what to offer next.

"When your baby's had a reaction, you're scared about introducing anything else," she said.

Emma's experience reflects the uncertainty many parents face as they navigate food allergy prevention. With food allergies now affecting one in 10 Australian babies, many parents are trying to balance growing advice about early allergy prevention with understandable concerns about reactions.

To help bridge that gap, the National Allergy Council, a partnership between the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) and Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, has launched the online [Food Follower App](#) as part of its Nip allergies in the Bub program. The free digital tool helps parents introduce common allergy-causing foods in age-appropriate forms and keep them in their baby's diet over time - an approach shown to reduce the risk of developing food allergies.

Research shows introducing foods such as peanut and well-cooked egg soon after a baby has started eating solid foods can help reduce the chance of them developing a food allergy to these foods. Recently updated [ASCIA infant feeding for food allergy prevention guideline](#) reinforces the importance of introducing these foods early and, if tolerated, continuing to include them in a child's diet at least once a week.

Dr Sandra Vale, CEO of the National Allergy Council, said while awareness has improved, many parents are still unsure how to put that advice into practice.

"Parents are hearing that introducing these foods matters, but many are unsure of when and how to do this or what to do next. The Food Follower App turns that evidence into something practical, helping parents introduce the common allergy causing foods and continue offering them regularly," Dr Vale said.

Dr Preeti Joshi, a paediatric clinical immunology and allergy specialist, said prevention starts early, but consistency is key.

"It is not just about offering a food once. To help reduce the risk of food allergy, these foods should be included around once a week, once they are tolerated. That is where many families find it challenging, and where tools like this can help," Dr Joshi said.

Many parents assume trying a food once is enough, delay introduction out of caution, or stop offering foods if they are not part of the household's usual diet. In reality, it is the combination of early introduction once the baby is ready for solid foods and ongoing inclusion at least once a week that helps reduce the risk of developing food allergies. This is particularly important for babies with eczema, especially moderate to severe eczema, who are at higher risk of developing food allergies.

Developed by the National Allergy Council, the Food Follower App helps parents track which common allergy causing foods have been introduced, and sends reminders and links to practical food ideas to help continue offering these foods at least once a week.

The online app can be personalised based on a baby's age and family eating habits, and allows families to log feeding progress, including notes on reactions. Records can also be shared with partners, carers and health professionals, helping maintain consistency across different care settings.

Maria Said AM, Director and Co-chair of the National Allergy Council, and representative of Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, said the tool addresses a gap between advice and real-life parenting.

"We know parents want to do the right thing, but introducing foods that many children are allergic to, can feel stressful. Having a simple way to keep track of the list of foods and reminders, reduces the stress of keeping on top of what has been introduced, especially as life with babies and toddlers is often very busy and parents are sleep deprived. Keeping this information in your head is a drain so this app can help reduce the load and make a real difference in building confidence and routine around introducing solid foods," commented Ms Said.

Emma said one of the biggest benefits of a tool like the Food Follower App is helping everyone involved in a child's care stay informed.

"When you're introducing new foods, it's important that everyone knows what's been tried and what needs to be offered regularly," she said. "Having that information in one place would make it much easier for parents, grandparents and other carers to stay on the same page and feel confident they're following the latest advice."

The online app was developed following consultations with parents through focus groups and feedback from the Nip allergies in the Bub program, which already reaches more than 160,000 parents and healthcare professionals each year. Alongside, Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia's National Allergy Helpline, it forms part of broader national efforts to reduce the growing burden of allergic disease, supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

Allergic disease affects more than 8 million Australians and continues to place significant challenges on individuals, families and the healthcare system.

For more information or to access the free online Food Follower App, visit the [Nip allergies in the Bub website](#).

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Available for interview:

- Dr Sandra Vale, CEO, National Allergy Council
- Maria Said AM, Director and Co-chair, National Allergy Council, and Health Strategy and Advocacy Manager of Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia
- Dr Preeti Joshi, Paediatric Clinical Immunology/Allergy Specialist (limited availability)
- Dr Merryn Netting, NAC Senior Project Officer and Allergy Dietitian
- Emma Williams, Melbourne's south-east, VIC (mother of child with egg allergy and eczema)
- Sarah Emery, CEO, Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia
- Other family case studies available on request.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL ALLERGY COUNCIL

The [National Allergy Council](#) is a partnership between the [Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy \(ASCIA\)](#) and [Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia](#), Australia's peak medical and patient support organisations for allergic disease. Funding from the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing enables the National Allergy Council, alongside ASCIA and Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, to deliver evidence-based public health initiatives, education, training and support in consultation with key stakeholders, to improve the health and wellbeing of people with allergic disease.

Allergy facts:

- An estimated [8.2 million people live with allergic disease, costing Australia \\$18.9 billion a year](#) in financial losses, and a further \$44.6 billion in wellbeing losses.
- [One in 10 babies](#) have a confirmed food allergy. [One in 20 adults](#) report a medication allergy. [One in 4](#) Australians have hay fever – up from one in seven in 2008. Up to [twelve Australians](#) die each year from bee or wasp stings.
- First Nations people are twice as likely to present at hospital with asthma and other allergy related illnesses, with [emergency department presentations significantly increasing between 2018 to 2023](#).
- The Australian Capital Territory and Victoria have some of the [highest rates](#) of allergic disease.
- Conditions often co-occur, meaning many people – and households – manage more than one allergic disease at the same time.
- In 2019-20, there was [more than 11,594 anaphylaxis presentations to emergency departments](#), nationally.
- [Anaphylaxis deaths increased by seven per cent](#) annually in Australia between 1997 and 2013 – mostly triggered by foods, insect stings or medications.
- Living with the risk of anaphylaxis has a [significant impact on health and wellbeing](#) of both the individuals and their families due to anxiety, isolation, and poor mental health.
- Allergic disease is complex, often people have more than one type, and multiple family members can be affected, requiring support and a coordinated approach to care, evidence-based education and research into prevention, diagnosis and management.