

Correspondence

Are allergy advisory statements helpful to patients with food allergy?

To the Editor:

I read with interest and appreciation the article by Hefle et al¹ as they alert clinicians, parents, or patients with peanut allergy that 10% of food products bearing allergy advisory statements (eg, “might contain [allergen],” “manufactured on shared equipment with [allergen],” and “manufactured in the same facility with [allergen]”) might contain a significant amount of peanut allergen. Therefore the current recommendation is for patients with peanut allergy to avoid food products bearing these statements. However, it is troubling that an overwhelming 90% of these food products bearing allergy advisory statements actually do not contain peanut allergen. Although the article specifically addresses peanut allergy advisory statements, such food allergy labeling also applies to other common food allergies, including milk, egg, soy, or wheat, which are particularly prevalent in children with atopic dermatitis. Most of these patients are already limited from consuming the food products that declare the presence of food allergens. Now they also have to avoid food products labeled with allergy advisory statements. This severely limits

their choices of food products and further adds to their parents’ frustration, especially knowing that possibly 90% or more of these food products with allergy advisory statements actually do not contain food allergens. Although further data are needed on the prevalence of milk, egg, soy, or wheat allergens in food products labeled with allergy advisory statements, it would seem reasonable to place more responsibility on the food companies to accurately measure the amount of food allergens in their products and to provide clearer information for parents or patients with food allergy.

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REFERENCE

1. Hefle SL, Furlong TJ, Niemann L, Lemon-Mule H, Sicherer S, Taylor SL. Consumer attitudes and risks associated with packaged foods having advisory labeling regarding the presence of peanuts. *J Allergy Clin Immunol* 2007;120:171-6.

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