

# Why Does Australia Appear to Have the Highest Rates of Food Allergy?

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## KEYWORDS

- Peanut allergy • Prevalence • Hygiene hypothesis • Microbial exposure • Migration
- Food allergy • Vitamin D

## KEY POINTS

- Food allergy is on the rise in developed countries and has been well-described in Australia using challenge-proven outcomes. It is believed to be linked to the modern-day lifestyle.
- The 3 key hypotheses for the rise in food allergy in the 21st century are currently (1) the hygiene hypothesis (which includes microbial diversity); (2) the dual allergen exposure (or Lack) hypothesis, and (3) the vitamin D hypothesis. There are as yet few published data with regard to other factors pertaining to food allergy as an outcome, although there are many studies in progress.
- High rates of food allergy in infants of Asian migrants provide a unique opportunity to explore possible explanations for this modern day phenomenon.

## INTRODUCTION

Food allergy appears to have risen in many developed countries around the world but none more so than in Australia.<sup>1-4</sup> We reported in 2011 that in a population cohort of more than 5000 1-year-old infants, more than 10% had evidence of challenge-proven food allergy.<sup>1</sup> Although there are now many hypotheses as to why food allergy appears to be rising worldwide, until recently there has been little direct evidence formally

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