

Prevalence and Associated Signs and Symptoms of Food Allergies among Selected Group of Adults Population: A Cross-sectional Study in Sri Lanka

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Background: Food allergies are a significant global public health concern, affecting individuals of all ages. However, limited research exists on the prevalence and symptom patterns of food allergies among adults in Sri Lanka.

Objective: To assess the prevalence of different food allergies and associated symptoms among a selected group of adult population in Sri Lanka.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using a pre-tested self-administered questionnaire distributed online as a Google form among 392 adults aged 18-36 from various districts in Sri Lanka using a random sampling method. The survey consisted of questions regarding socio-demographic data, food allergy according to vegetables, fruits, meat, seafood, beverages, dairy products, and symptoms of food allergy.

Results: Of the sample, 42% reported that they have food allergies while 52% had no experience of food allergies. When considering specific food categories, the prevalence of allergies for meat, vegetables, fruits, beverages, sea food, dairy products, nuts were 18.4%, 3.6%, 17.6%, 5.6%, 14.5%, 2.8%, 0.8% respectively. Among those who had an allergy for meat, 13.8% were allergic to beef. When considering Fruits, 16.8% were allergic to pineapple. Only 2.8% were allergic to mushrooms among those allergic to vegetables. Among those with allergy to beverages 5.9% were allergic to alcoholic drinks. Only 1.5% were allergic to curd and 12% were allergic to prawns. Chlorphenamine was the most commonly used drug for food allergies (19.4%) while using Cetirizine (2.6%) and Prednisolone (1.5%) too. The most prominent symptoms of allergies were itching, and red rashes and the rate was 26.8% (n=105).

Conclusions: Significant proportion of adults participated in the study had food allergies while showing the varying degree for different food groups including meat, fruits and seafoods. These findings can inform healthcare professionals and individuals about the prevalence and management of food allergies, contributing to improved healthcare strategies and public awareness.

Keywords: *Chlorphenamine, food allergy, meat, mushroom, seafood*