

Best treatments for allergic conditions? Some doctors don't even know

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People who suffer from allergies want to keep up-to-date on the latest information regarding treatment, but it's not always easy. Some doctors don't even know fact from fiction when it comes to treating allergies.

According to a study presented at the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) Annual Scientific Meeting, prevailing [allergy](#) myths have a long shelf life. The study surveyed 409 physicians - either in internal medicine or pediatrics - on the topic of treating allergies. The physicians all received six questions on allergy treatment, but because pediatricians treat children's allergies, they answered three additional questions.

"We asked what the best first treatment was for a patient experiencing vomiting and hives after eating a known food allergen," said allergist and ACAAI member Kara Wada, MD, lead study author. "Only 50 percent of internal medicine physicians knew it was epinephrine. And 85 percent of internal medicine physicians thought the flu vaccine shouldn't be given to egg-allergic patients. It's now known that it's safe for those with egg allergies to get the flu shot."

Other myths reported in the survey include:

- Only 27 percent of the pediatric physicians correctly identified the most common causes of food allergy in children under 4 years of age as both eggs and milk. 34 percent identified strawberries and 13 percent thought it was artificial food coloring.
- Both groups thought it was necessary to ask about allergies to iodine, shellfish and artificial dyes before ordering a CT scan and other imaging procedures which use iodinated contrast for better imaging. Since shellfish contain iodine, many [physicians](#) have linked a contrast reaction to a

shellfish allergy. However, shellfish allergy has nothing to do with the reaction, and iodine can't be an allergen as it is found in the human body.

- The majority of pediatricians thought that skin prick testing for food or inhaled allergens isn't accurate or reliable until 3 years of age. While skin prick testing is rarely conducted on infants younger than 6 months old, there is otherwise no age limit.

"If you suspect you or your child has an allergy, it's important to see a board-certified allergist," said allergist and ACAAI fellow and member David Stukus, MD, senior study author. "Allergists are first board-certified in pediatrics and/or [internal medicine](#), and then have an additional two years of training in the specialty of allergy/immunology. It's that training that makes them the best qualified to treat allergic conditions of all kinds."

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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