

Introduction

This essay will describe some of the challenges faced by an individual or group today. The chosen group is children living with an allergy / allergies and the effect / challenges faced by them and their parents / caregivers.

Quach, L., John, R. (2018) states that the way a child lives their life can be defined by living with a food allergy. In some cases an allergic reaction can be fatal, this is dependent on their hypersensitivity. For a child this needs to be managed by a caregiver, to enable a safe environment is provided. This can include activities within the home and social activities outside the home. This can be stressful, as they will be conscious of the limitations. Psychosocial problems are seen more in children with allergies than those without.

Birdi, C., Cooke, R., Knibb, R. explain that many children can be only diagnosed by their parents with having a food allergy, this is due to there being limited research into this.

Caregivers and parents of children with a food allergy, whether parent diagnosed or medically diagnosed, are said to have poorer mental health. This is due to allergies being potentially life threatening and can cause unpredictable consequences. Parents should be encouraged to have medical tests for their children to establish any allergy concerns and for them to be referred to obtain any support where needed.

Qualch. L. (2018) suggests that immediately after a child has a diagnosis is when the caregivers anxiety peaks, especially if they lack knowledge in this field. Fear is caused by the thought of the child accidentally consuming one of their allergens.

Caregivers do then tend to become more overprotective. This can have an impact on the child later on in life, as they will have a lower functioning. They may struggle with separation anxiety as once the child needs to attend a childcare setting, such as nursery, they feel lose of control over managing their child's needs.

Over time, caregivers will usually find a way to cope, developing strategies and ways to provide their child with a normal life.

London Allergy and Immunology Centre (2023) suggest that 50% of children suffer from one or multiple allergies. Approx 8% of children in the UK have a food allergy.

Explained by Allergy UK (2023), a severe allergic reaction is when a person goes into Anaphylaxis. This requires immediate action, as it is called as a medical emergency. A person can go in an anaphylactic shock and must be treated with an Adrenaline Auto Injector.

Anaphylaxis UK (2023) suggest that this can be a very traumatic experience for not only just the child, but the whole family. Finding safe foods to eat can be challenging, especially due to eating being a part of daily living and routines. Anxiousness in parents and caregivers can reflect on a child and can cause them to become anxious and develop fears.

To build up a child's confidence they need to learn about their allergies. They will then be able to learn what they are allergic to and how to say no, especially when being pressured by peers and other acquaintances. By involving a child in any appointments, it will give them the confidence to ask medical professionals any questions they may have. Also they need to be prepared for new challenges, such as using an Adrenaline Auto Injector. By preparing a child to go out to eat at a restaurant, it can help them realise they can still do things that others do. When they are old enough, they can be encouraged to read the menu before hand online. Carrying out role play scenarios can be ideal to prepare a child for situations in a friend's house or a party.

Lack of preparation can lead to a child be excluding from social events and lead to a child becoming isolated and feeling different to other children.

Wrubel, D. (2021) states that children with allergies can feel embarrassed by unwanted attention they receive in regard to their allergy. Also due to special accommodations needed to be made, children may be excluded from social events. These can include parties, school trips, sleep overs, and virtually all outdoor activities. If the child is not excluded the parent may feel the need to accompany them, this can contribute to delays in a child's social development and independence.

Tassoni, P., Bulman, K., Beith, K. (2008, p. 144) believe that independence can be achieved when children are helped to gain confidence. When a child is self-reliant, it can have positive impacts on their behaviour, tantrums can be prevented, and other frustration caused behaviours. Children should should be encouraged to being independent from as early as possible, until ready to join the adult world.

Allergy UK suggest that it is a vulnerable time when exploring the path to independence for both the child and the parent / carer of a child living with an allergy. Mental health can suffer, as anxiety levels can increase and signs of low self-esteem may be seen.

A parent / carer can experience a feeling of loosing control.

Children may grow considerably between the ages of five to eleven. At this time they possibly begin primary school, this is a massive step into their journey of independence. They will spend more time in the care of others. This is therefore an ideal time for them to begin learning more about their condition and having the confidence to start managing the condition in a more independent manner. During this time, their social life will become more excessive. Preparation is key at this stage to promote independence.

From approximately eleven years old, it is extremely important to guide and support a child and offering encouragement for them to take responsibility for their allergies, enabling them to make suitable life choices. These years are the road to teenage years, along with battling

hormones, they also have their condition that they need to know how to deal with. This can have an impact on their mental health. They may also have the use of a mobile device, such as a phone. It is very important to ensure they are aware of the risk of cyberbullying. A child should be left to control how much information they give their peers in regards to their allergy. However, it should be encouraged to make them aware that the more information people have on their condition can assist in keeping them safer and helping others recognise any potential risks. It is important that allergies do not affect the fun they may have at this age, when they are eating out, socialising, and possibly travelling. These are excellent ways for children to become educated and learn more about different subjects, places and ideas.

As a child approaches 18, they now enter adulthood. A parent's support can be seen as starting to come to an end. However, there may be additional needs as they now are potentially leaving home, maybe starting university or a new job.

At university there is an act to reasonably protect the health, safety and welfare of a student. This is a general duty of care at common law (Health and Safety at Work Act 1974).

If moving out, they need to ensure they are living in an environment safe for their needs. It can be more complicated if they are to be sharing with others. They would need to follow certain procedures and methods to ensure there is no incidents such as cross-contamination. Also shopping for safe foods and label reading needs to be learnt if not already done so.

Gov.Uk (2019) released Natasha's Law in 2019. This was to enable allergy sufferers to have confidence in the food they were buying and to protect them.

This was implemented following the tragic death of Natasha Ednan-Laperouse. She was just a teenager when she suffered a fatal allergic reaction to a baguette she purchased from Pret a Manger. This tragedy saw the government confirming stronger laws were needed to protect those with allergies.

This law was implemented in October 2021.

The Food Standard Agency have stated that food businesses within the UK must now offer information as to which food allergens are within the ingredients of the food they provide.

The food law <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eur/2011/1169/contents> has 14 allergens they have identified as the most potent or prevalent allergens.

These being:

- Celery
- Cereals, containing gluten
- Crustaceans
- Eggs
- Fish

- Lupin
- Milk
- Molluscs
- Mustard
- Peanuts
- Sesame
- Soybeans
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites
- Tree nuts

Natasha Allergy Research Foundation (2019) stated the dangers of allergies being ignored, which was evident following Natasha's death. Food allergies were dismissed. There are rising numbers of children being diagnosed and even adults with no previous allergic reactions, suddenly having an anaphylactic reaction. There is a significant rise in allergies, with 1 in 4 people living with a food allergy and scientifically we are not having any answers or reasons as to why.

Food allergies are becoming known as an enemy and are unfortunately less understood.

Conclusion

To conclude, this essay has shown the difficulties and challenges that a child and their parent / caregiver may experience due to a child having an allergy. It has recognised the dangers for that child, with potentially a fatal outcome. This is then reflected in fears and anxieties for the parent / caregiver, which can then be passed on to the child.

We have learnt that primarily it is the parent / caregivers responsibility to ensure that child is kept safe from their allergens. As time passes it becomes clear that their role will alter and they then go on to having a role of encouraging the child to be independent and manage their condition themselves. This can be a difficult task, as we have seen that these parent / caregivers may have a more overprotective parenting / caring style, so they then need to allow the child to become more independent.

We have seen how independence is so valuable and teaching this from a young age can be beneficial to help with their confidence.

We have covered the importance of educating the child in aspects of daily life to ensure that they do not feel isolated and are aware that their condition can be managed, and they can therefore live a life equally to their peers, just with slight adaption.

We have seen that this is a very important topic in today's society, not only from the social and wellbeing aspect, but also the fact there is legislation in place to ensure people with an allergy

can be included in every day social activities, without living in fear of repercussions. We have seen from Natashas Law the fatal and devastating impact food allergies can have on a person with allergies and their families.

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