Kids can be mean, especially if you stick out from the crowd. A new study, published in *Pediatrics*, suggests that nearly half of kids with food allergies have been bullied, with a third reporting the bullying was food-related. One-eighth had been forced to touch the food that triggered their allergy, and one-tenth actually had the dangerous food thrown at them.

Eyal Shemesh, MD, of Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, surveyed [1] 251 food allergy patients aged 8 to 17 who sought treatment at Mount Sinai’s allergy center, along with their parents. About half the time, parents reported not knowing about the bullying.

Still, it may be a good idea for clinicians to ask kids with food allergies if they’ve been bullied. School officials must also be aware of this bullying, as it can be life threatening to a child with a severe food allergy.

ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross says the study sounds alarming, but may not tell the whole story. There is a major flaw in this report it does not give the corresponding number of kids without food allergies who report bullying, he says. But whatever the comparison figure is, schoolchildren need to be firmly counseled about the real dangers involved in exposing schoolmates to foods to which they are allergic. Acute anaphylaxis from, say, contact with peanuts or peanut butter can kill a highly-allergic person, child or adult. School officials need to nip this behavior in the bud.

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