
Peanut Allergy

What is a peanut allergy?

Peanut allergy is the most common, dangerous food allergy. It often starts in childhood and continues as an adult.

A person can have a mild, moderate or severe reaction to peanut. An allergic reaction begins right away but some may be delayed for up to 4 hours.

Mild or moderate: Some signs are rash, hives, runny nose, itchy or watery eyes, coughing.

Severe: Some signs are coughing, choking, gagging, wheezing, trouble breathing, cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, swelling around mouth and rest of body. **This is called anaphylaxis and must be treated with an EpiPen right away.** People with severe allergy must avoid all peanut products. They should not have any peanut products in the house.

Some people with a peanut allergy are also allergic to beans, lentils, peas and liquorice.

Is there any way to get rid of a peanut allergy?

There is no way to get rid of peanut allergy. You must avoid peanuts and peanut products. Peanut allergy is rarely outgrown.

Ways to avoid having a reaction to peanuts . . .

- Read labels very carefully. If the food is not labeled, do not buy it.
- Do not have any food containing peanut in the home. This includes peanut butter, peanut oil, and many types of chocolate and candy.



Ways to avoid having a reaction to peanuts . . .

- When going to other peoples' homes, restaurants and social events, advise them that you have a peanut allergy. Do not eat any food that you do not know exactly what is in it. If you have any doubt, do not eat it.
- Do not eat food with any other nuts because peanut is often added to these. It is cheaper to add peanuts as a 'filler' for products such as 'walnut' doughnuts and 'almond' cake icing.
- Avoid eating at salad bars as the food may have been near peanut products.
- Avoid eating store bought or restaurant chocolate, cereals, and cookies or donuts.
- For young children, send food with them to eat at school and parties. Many schools, daycares and nursery schools will agree to have no peanut products in the building. Arrange to have a meeting with the person in charge to talk about this.
- Avoid kissing someone who has just eaten peanuts or a peanut product. Kissing may give enough exposure to peanut to cause a reaction.

What to do for a reaction?

- If you think you have eaten or been in touch with peanut, go to an Emergency Department right away. It is better to be there in case you need help.
- If you have any symptoms of a reaction, use the EpiPen right away.
- Take antihistamine medication if you have it.

Can peanut allergy be prevented?

For a family where a parent or child already has peanut allergy, it may help to avoid eating peanut during the 3rd trimester and while breastfeeding.

No child should get whole peanut until 5 years of age since he or she may not be able to describe mild symptoms of a reaction.