

# Living with allergy – nuts and peanuts

A confirmed diagnosis of allergy to nuts means that you will need to avoid all nuts. Although peanuts belong to a different food family, unless you are specifically told otherwise, they too should be avoided. The reasons for this are the allergy often extends between nuts, plus, contamination may occur between the different types of nuts in during processing.

## Avoiding nuts

Nuts are used in a variety of manufactured foods, sometimes unexpectedly.

This list is not complete and it is always worth checking the labels on particular foods. Check the labels regularly too as recipes can change.

### Foods that often contain nuts include:

- Breakfast cereals
- Cereal bars and biscuits
- Cakes, pastries meringues
- Ice cream and desserts
- Confectionary
- Some yoghurts and fromage frais
- Vegetarian products e.g. vegetable burgers
- Hydrolysed vegetable protein (sometimes made from peanut)
- Salad and salad dressings
- Pesto sauces
- Satay sauce
- Curries, Chinese Indian, Thai and Indonesian dishes Stuffing mixtures for meats
- Marzipan and praline
- E471 and E472 which may be made from peanut oil Lecithin, sometimes made from peanut

Watch out for peanuts under different names, including, *groundnuts, earth nuts, monkey nuts, Chinese nuts, goober nuts, ground pea* and *bamba*. *Arachis oil* in cosmetics is peanut oil. People with almond allergy should avoid *almond* essence. Roasting and heat treatment can make nuts more allergenic. Unwrapped foods such as those bought in bakeries have no labels and are best avoided.

## May contain traces...

If you or your child react to very small traces of nut, it is best to avoid foods with labels stating that the food may contain nuts or traces of nuts.

## Peanut and nut oils

Peanut oil may be classified as either crude or refined. For the majority of people with a peanut allergy, refined oil will cause either no reaction or only a mild one. This is because the protein which causes the allergy is not present in the oil.

Unrefined or crude oils are more likely to cause symptoms. Speciality oils such as walnut oil can contain the allergy-causing protein and it is a good idea to avoid them.

## Medicines, multivitamins and cosmetics

Peanut or nut oil are sometimes used in medicines, multivitamins and cosmetics. Usually this is the refined oil and should not cause a problem. However, if you are in doubt then try and avoid using the product. For medicines, check with the pharmacist.

## Sesame seeds are different

Commonly found in seeded breads and hummus, sesame seeds are not nuts. If sesame seeds haven't yet been tried, it may be worth talking to one of the allergy team before introducing them into the diet.

## Coconut, pine nut and nutmeg

Most people with a nut allergy can eat these without a problem as they belong to different food groups to nuts. Sometimes *cashew nuts* are used in *pesto-based products* so it's always worth checking the labels.

## Legumes

Peanuts are actually legumes, so a small percentage of people who are allergic to peanuts will also be allergic to related foods: *peas beans* and *lentils*. If legumes are a problem, watch out for

products *lupin flour* which is sometimes used in bakery products, especially from the continent.

## Eating out and having some fun

As well as in restaurants, food from bakeries and delicatessen counters is unlabeled and accidental exposures can easily happen. Before eating out it is worth checking beforehand if the restaurant can guarantee that any dish is safe. If they cannot give you this guarantee then it is best to choose one that can.

If your child is having a party or going to a party, have a word with the party organiser about the food that will be served.

## Travelling by plane

Eating peanuts and nuts in airline food is the most likely cause of a reaction in flight. Remember, to avoid this risk, you can take your own food on board.

Another source of a reaction is through skin contact. If another passenger touches a surface after eating nuts, some of the nut protein may be left on the surface and picked up by the person with the allergy. As well as making sure you have the emergency medication to hand, you can clean the area around the seat with a wet wipe.

The vast majority of people do not react to proteins released from packets of peanuts. It might be worth contacting the airline before flying as some have a policy to remove all nuts on flights when they know that a passenger has a nut allergy.

**Further information on allergy is available from [www.allergyai.com](http://www.allergyai.com)**

**These lists are guides – always check the individual labels.**

**If it's not labeled, it is safer to avoid the food.**