

Parent Peanut Allergy Information

Why should special precautions be taken with peanut allergies?

Peanuts can be a dangerous allergy because they tend to cause particularly severe reactions. Peanut allergies account for the largest number of allergy-related deaths and the greatest incidence of anaphylaxis (a serious allergic reaction that can cause death). For some individuals, trace amounts of peanuts can cause a severe reaction. Non-ingestion contact (such as touching peanuts or inhaling peanut particles) is less likely to trigger severe reactions compared with ingestion contact. Even so, extreme caution should always be used because proximity to peanuts increases the opportunity for ingestion. The prevalence of peanut allergies in American children tripled from 1997 to 2008. Still, approximately 20-25% of children with a peanut allergy do outgrow it.

What are the symptoms?

The most common symptoms of an allergic reaction to peanuts include eczema, hives, asthma, runny nose, digestive symptoms, and anaphylaxis.

What foods contain peanuts?

There are many unexpected sources of peanuts, so reading food labels is important to eliminate exposure to peanuts. Artificial nuts can be peanuts that have been deflavored and re-flavored with pecan, walnut, or almond. Mandelonas are peanuts soaked in almond flavoring. Many items may not contain peanuts but may be produced in a facility where peanuts are processed or used as an ingredient. As a result, cross contact with peanuts may occur. Many snack foods may be produced in a facility where many different types of snack foods or many different varieties of a product (for example, cereal bars) are produced. Some of the varieties of that product may include peanuts or peanut butter. A product that is labeled as being produced in a facility with peanuts should not be consumed by an individual with a peanut allergy.

Some examples of products that might contain peanuts include the following:

- Artificial nuts, ground nuts, mixed nuts, peanut butter, peanut flour
- Candy, nougat
- Cereals
- Cold pressed, expressed, or expelled peanut oil
- Egg rolls
- Frozen yogurt and ice cream
- Glazes and marinades
- Granola bars, cereal bars, and breakfast bars
- Hydrolyzed plant protein
- Hydrolyzed vegetable protein
- Marzipan
- Potato pancakes
- Sauces such as chili sauce, spaghetti sauce, hot sauce, pesto, gravy, mole sauce, and salad dressing
- Some vegetarian food products, especially those advertised as meat substitutes
- Sweets such as pudding, cookies, and hot chocolate

How are peanuts described on food labels?

Food labels regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) follow the regulations of the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA) by listing the major eight food allergens on the label in plain language either in the ingredient list or in a "contains" statement.

What are recommendations for parents and schools?

Schools and parents are highly encouraged to collaborate on the development of appropriate, individual plans that address each student's unique peanut allergy needs. Furthermore, parents need to communicate allergies with other exceptional health situations on the student's emergency card. While it is understood that no environment can be guaranteed to be 100% peanut-free, steps can be taken to minimize exposure based on the student's individualized health profile. Plans for students can include avoidance and prevention strategies, signs and symptoms of a reaction, severity of reactions and history of anaphylaxis, treatment plan for reactions, medication location and dosage instructions, and dietary instructions and modifications. Questions about allergy protocols for individual students should be directed to the school principal.