Ferrell-Duncan Clinic Allergy/Immunology

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**Peanut Allergy**

Allergy to peanuts appears to be on the rise. One study showed that from 1997 to 2002, the incidence of peanut allergy doubled in children. Peanuts can trigger a severe reaction. The severity of a reaction depends on how sensitive an individual is and the quantity consumed.

**How to Read a Label for a Peanut-Free Diet**

All FDA-regulated manufactured food products that contain peanut as an ingredient are required by U.S. law to list the word “peanut” on the product label.

**Avoid foods that contain peanuts or any of these ingredients:**

* artificial nuts, beer nuts, goobers, ground nuts, mixed nuts, monkey nuts
* cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded peanut oil
* nut pieces, nutmeat
* peanut butter, peanut flour
* peanut protein hydrolysate

**Peanut is sometimes found in the following:**

* African, Asian *(Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, Thai, and Vietnamese)*, and Mexican dishes
* baked goods *(e.g., pastries, cookies)*
* candy *(including chocolate candy)*
* chili
* egg rolls
* enchilada sauce
* marzipan
* nougat
* Sauces such as chili sauce, hot sauce, pesto, gravy, mole sauce, salad dressing, glazes, and marinades
* Sweets such as pudding, cookies, and hot chocolate
* Potato pancakes
* Pet food
* Specialty pizzas
* Some vegetarian food products, especially those advertised as meat substitutes

**Keep the following in mind:**

* Mandelonas are peanuts soaked in almond flavoring.
* The FDA exempts highly refined peanut oil from being labeled as an allergen. Studies show that most allergic individuals can safely eat peanut oil that has been highly refined (not cold pressed, expeller pressed, or extruded peanut oil). Follow your doctor’s advice.
* A study showed that unlike other legumes, there is a strong possibility of cross-reaction between peanuts and lupine.
* Arachis oil is peanut oil.
* Many experts advise patients allergic to peanuts to avoid tree nuts as well.
* Sunflower seeds are often produced on equipment shared with peanuts.

**Keep in Mind**

* Some alternative nut butters, such as soy nut butter or sunflower seed butter, are produced on equipment shared with other tree nuts and, in some cases, peanuts. Contact the manufacturer before eating these products.
* Discuss with your primary doctor or allergist whether to avoid tree nuts. People allergic to peanuts may develop allergies to other foods, including tree nuts. In addition, the chance of a reaction due to [**cross-contact**](http://www.foodallergy.org/page/cross-contact1) between peanut and tree nuts during the manufacturing process will be lowered if you avoid them altogether.
* Ice cream served in ice cream parlors should be avoided; cross-contact occurs frequently because of shared scoops.
* Sometimes, foods that are supposed to contain almonds or other tree nuts contain peanuts instead.
* Peanuts go by many names, such as ground nuts, beer nuts, or monkey nuts. Use caution if you are unsure!
* Studies show that most allergic individuals can safely eat peanut oil (not cold pressed, expelled, or extruded peanut oil - sometimes represented as gourmet oils). If you are allergic to peanuts, ask your doctor whether or not you should avoid peanut oil.
* Younger siblings of children allergic to peanuts may be at increased risk for allergy to peanuts. Your doctor can provide guidance about testing for siblings.
* Peanuts can be found in many foods and candies, especially chocolate candy. Check all labels carefully. Contact the manufacturer if you have questions.
* Peanuts can cause severe allergic reactions. If prescribed, carry epinephrine at all times. Learn more about [**anaphylaxis**](http://www.foodallergy.org/section/a)**.**

**Commonly Asked Questions**

**Can peanut allergy be outgrown?**   
Although once considered to be a lifelong allergy, recent studies indicate that up to 20% of children diagnosed with peanut allergy outgrow it.

**Can alternative nut butters (i.e., cashew nut butter) be substituted for peanut butter?**   
Many nut butters are produced on equipment used to process peanut butter, therefore making it somewhat of a risky alternative. Additionally, many experts recommend peanut-allergic patients avoid tree nuts as well.

For more information: [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)