

Peanut Allergies

It is estimated that one in two hundred people in the United States have a nut allergy. People who have a peanut allergy are allergic to one or more of the proteins that are found in peanuts. These proteins are not denatured during the cooking process. Peanuts of all kinds (raw, cooked, roasted, etc.) can be dangerous to someone with a peanut allergy. Anyone can have a peanut allergy, but often people who have eczema, asthma, or hay fever are likely to be allergic to peanuts as well. Individuals who have family members with peanut allergies are also likely to have peanut allergies as well.

TREATING AN ALLERGIC REACTION

For someone who has an allergy to peanuts, the onset of an allergic reaction can occur almost instantaneously and continue rapidly. Depending on the severity of one's allergy, the allergic reaction can be fatal.

An allergic reaction can be treated with epinephrine (Epi Pen®). Epinephrine should be administered immediately once signs of an allergic reaction are noticed. It is not uncommon for a person experiencing an allergic reaction to peanuts to experience symptoms even after epinephrine is given. It would be wise to stay beside that person until they feel well. Some people who are allergic to peanuts will wear a MedicAlert bracelet and carry epinephrine (an Epi Pen®) with them at all time. If you suspect that someone is experiencing an allergic reaction to peanuts, look for their epinephrine.

SYMPTOMS OF AN ALLERGIC REACTION

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nervousness, fear• Flushed face• Hives• Swollen/Itchy lips, mouth, eyes, tongue• Tension in the mouth, chest and/or throat• Difficulty breathing or swallowing• Drooling• Wheezing• Choking• Coughing• Voice change | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vomiting• Nausea• Diarrhea• Stomach pains• Dizziness• Sudden fatigue• Rapid heartbeat• Chills• Paleness• Loss of consciousness• Coma• Death |
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PREVENTING AN ALLERGIC REACTION

In recent years, peanuts have become more commonly used in processed products because it is inexpensive source of protein. Although some institutions or companies do not provide complete or adequate food labels, one ought to read food labels carefully in order to prevent an allergic reaction to peanuts.

It is not uncommon for some food manufacturing companies to use the same equipment to produce peanut and non-peanut products. Such products may include cereal, chocolate, baked good, nuts, and ice cream. Some companies acknowledge this on the nutritional panel of the product. Exercising caution when you are suspicious of certain foods is the best thing to do because some food labels may not identify peanuts as an ingredient. The label may use the term, "hydrolyzed vegetable protein" or "groundnuts."

If you are preparing food to share with others, be cautious when using peanuts in the recipe. If ingredients include peanuts, be sure to let your guests know. It is equally important to ask a food service manager or preferably the food service chef if an item contains peanuts or is made with peanut oil when one is suspicious of a food. The person preparing your food may be unaware of the danger of a peanut allergy in which case, cross contamination may be a logical concern.

When eating out, it is important to keep in mind that many African, Chinese, Indonesian, Mexican Thai, and Vietnamese dishes often contain peanuts. It is important to mention your allergy to your waiter or chef.

TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH A PEANUT ALLERGY

- Prepare your own meals.
- Avoid fried food.
- Read food labels.
- Ask your food service chef, manager, worker questions about suspicious food.
- Wear a MedicAlert bracelet or necklace.
- Carry your epinephrine pen with you.
- Avoid foods containing:
 - Arachis
 - Bouillon
 - Emulsified ingredients
 - Food additive 322
 - Hydrolyzed vegetable protein
 - Lecithins (soy lecithin is OK)
 - Mandelonas