

Nut allergy

Nut allergies are one of the most common food allergies. While many reactions to nuts are mild, serious reactions can occur. Children with a nut allergy need to avoid nuts in their diet.

In Australia food manufacturers must state the presence of nuts in a product. Carefully check the labels of any foods that you buy for the presence of nuts in the ingredient list. Check every time, even if you have bought that product before. The ingredient lists should be used as a guide only as food products can change. Check with the manufacturer if you are unsure.

Should my child avoid all types of nuts?

Generally, all nuts should be avoided. It is possible to have an allergy to peanuts but not other nuts (eg tree nuts) and vice versa. Your allergy doctor will advise you about which nuts should be avoided in your child's diet.

Which nuts should be avoided?

- > peanuts
- > almond
- > walnuts
- > candlenuts
- > hazelnuts
- > macadamia
- > pecans
- > chestnuts
- > Brazil nuts
- > mixed nuts
- > cashew nuts
- > pistachio nuts

Coconut is not a nut. Most children with nut allergy will tolerate coconut and it only needs to be avoided if your doctor has advised this. You should also check with your allergy doctor to see if your child should avoid seeds.

Avoid these ingredients:

- > peanut butter and peanut paste
- > praline, baci (hazelnut)
- > arachis (peanut)
- > marzipan (almond)
- > rhen flakes (peanut)
- > nutella spread and other nut pastes
- > satay sauce
- > cashew nut paste
- > ground nuts
- > peanut flour
- > peanut oil

Check these foods:

- > cakes, muffins ,biscuits
- > Indian, Chinese, Thai and Asian foods
- > ice creams (especially hazelnut)
- > salad dressings (watch for nut oils)
- > muesli bars
- > satay sauces and other marinades
- > sweet pies and dessert dishes
- > pasta sauces and curry bases in jars
- > chocolates, nougat, marzipan
- > breakfast cereals
- > dips
- > pesto
- > vegetarian products (eg vegetable patties)

Eating out

If your child has a food allergy there is no reason why you should not enjoy eating out with careful planning.

If your child needs emergency medication (eg an EpiPen) they should not eat out unless they have their medication with them.

Order simple dishes such as grilled meats without sauces, steamed vegetables and potato. Fresh fruit is a good option for dessert. Always check with the staff about the ingredients in the dish you want to order. If you are unsure about the ingredients in a dish do not order it.

Cross contamination

Be aware of cross-contamination, where nut containing foods are cooked in the same pan (eg foods with satay sauce).

Use a piece of alfoil under meat cooked on barbeque plates. This prevents contamination from nut containing marinades on the same barbeque plate.

Take care in ice cream shops. The same scoop may have been used for nut containing ice creams (especially chocolate hazelnut flavours).

Peanut butter and satay sauces are very sticky. Avoid using serving utensils or knives which may be contaminated with these. Peanut butter on knives can contaminate margarine.

Many playgroups and preschools have 'nut free' policies. But beware of other children eating peanut butter sandwiches and playing with toys with sticky hands. Your child should not do craft activities using nuts or nut products.

Other products?

You should check the labels of shampoo, sunburn cream, nappy lotion and other skin creams as these may contain nut oils, such as almond and peanut oil.

Is nut allergy life long?

Nut allergy is likely to be life long, but there are a few children who outgrow their nut allergy. As your child gets older, it is important to have regular check ups with the allergy doctor. The doctor will check if the nut allergy is still present.

What if my child has a severe reaction to nuts?

Children who have had a severe immediate reaction (anaphylaxis) to nuts with involvement of the respiratory and/or cardiovascular system should have a medical assessment, and plan for follow up. The doctor will provide an action plan for the child's home, child care centre, and school detailing the symptoms of anaphylaxis and how this should be managed.

More information

- > Anaphylaxis Australia: www.allergyfacts.org.au
- > Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI) website: www.allergy.org.au

Children, Youth and Women's Health Service
Nutrition Department
72 King William Road
North Adelaide SA 5006
Telephone: (08) 8161 7233

