Peanut & Tree Nut Allergy
Information for patients, relatives and carers

Child Health

ℹ️ For more information, please contact:
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Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

or

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Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL

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What is nut allergy?

Some people are sensitive to the proteins in nuts. When this happens, the body’s immune system produces antibodies to the nut protein resulting in an allergic reaction. People can be allergic to one nut or a number of different nuts.

One in five children will grow out of their nut allergy.

What is the difference between peanuts & tree nuts?

Peanuts are legumes, related to peas, beans and lentils. Peanuts grow in the ground rather than on trees and are sometimes referred to as ground nuts. If you are allergic to peanuts be aware of lupin (also a legume) which is used as flour in some baked goods. One quarter of people with a peanut allergy will also have a lupin allergy.

Tree nuts include, but not limited to: almonds, brazil nuts, cashew nuts, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pistachios and walnuts. There is a possibility that there may be cross reactivity with tree nuts, especially between cashew nuts and pistachio. This means that if you are allergic to one you are more likely to be allergic to the other.
What are the signs and symptoms of a nut allergy?

Mild symptoms may include:

- Itchy, tingling sensation of lips, tongue and throat
- Itchy nettle rash or bigger rash (urticaria)
- Vomiting
- Swelling of lips, eyes and face
- Diarrhoea

Severe symptoms (anaphylaxis) may include:

- Swelling or tightening of the throat, tongue and airway
- Change in voice or hoarseness
- Difficult/noisy breathing (wheezing)
- Light headedness, dizziness
- Faint & collapse

Anaphylaxis is the name given to a severe life threatening reaction and can cause serious breathing problems and low blood pressure, which can lead to the person collapsing. Not all nut allergic people will experience anaphylaxis. People with asthma are at greater risk of developing a severe reaction.
Treatment

Accidental exposure can occur, so oral antihistamine (e.g. Piriton / Cetirzine etc.) should be carried at all times. If you have asthma, your Salbutamol inhaler (blue) should also be carried at all times.

Depending on the reaction and if you have more than one nut allergy and if you have any other associated medical conditions, such as asthma, you may also be prescribed an Adrenaline auto-injector (Epipen, Emerade or Jext)

In case of a severe reaction, an adrenaline auto-injector should be given and ring 999. Some patients may need a second dose if available, five to 10 minutes later, if the symptoms recur.

Training in how to use the prescribed adrenaline auto-injector should be given following diagnosis by the prescriber. Ideally you should be followed up in an allergy clinic.
How do you manage a nut allergy?

The best way to manage your nut allergy is total avoidance of the nut(s) that you are allergic to. The important things to remember in managing your nut allergy are to:

- Identify and avoid the nuts that cause your allergy
- Recognise the symptoms of an allergic reaction
- Know how to treat any allergic reactions

It is important to always carry your allergy medication with you. These include oral antihistamines, and if prescribed, adrenaline auto-injector (e.g. EpiPen) and Salbutamol (blue) inhaler.

If you are allergic to one nut, and have not yet been tested for other nuts, it is safer and easier to avoid all nuts until you have been tested and found not to be allergic to other nuts.
Nut Allergy and Asthma

It is important to ensure if you are diagnosed with a Viral induced wheeze or Asthma that your asthma or VIW is well controlled as this can be a contributing factor to the severity of the anaphylactic reaction, if you were accidently exposed to nuts.

Take your medication as prescribed by your doctor and attend for regular asthma reviews to ensure you are on the correct treatment.

If you were to have a mild or severe reaction, you can take 10 puffs of Salbutamol before or after giving your adrenaline auto-injector.
How can risks with nut allergy be reduced?

Always read food labels, even if you have eaten the products before, as recipes are sometimes changed. All pre-packaged food sold in the UK must declare and highlight if they include any of the 14 major allergens. These include peanuts and all common tree nuts.

Some examples of foods to avoid:

- Unrefined peanut oil, Arachis & Groundnut oils
- Satay sauce (peanuts)
- Muesli (different nuts)
- Waldorf salad (walnuts)
- Macaroons (almonds)
- Marzipan (almonds)
- Nougat (roasted nuts)
- Halva (nut butter)
- Praline (different nuts)
- Chocolate spread (hazelnuts)

Always read the labels on cakes, biscuits, sweets, cereals, dips & sauces, vegetarian food and desserts.
Eating out

Restaurants and businesses that sell food are required to provide information about the presence of allergens. Don’t be afraid to inform staff of any allergies and ask questions about anything you are unsure or concerned about. If in doubt do not eat the food.

Be aware that if you can eat a dish in one restaurant, especially Eastern restaurants, another restaurant may make this dish differently. It is therefore important to check ingredients if you are eating somewhere new.

Other products to avoid

Some medicines, soaps, cosmetics and personal care products contain peanut oil (sometimes called arachis oil) and some skin oils contain almond oil. For more information please see the anaphylaxis campaign factsheet ‘Cosmetics, personal care products and medicines’ (website listed under helpful sites).
Cross contamination

Cross contamination is a risk for people with nut allergy. To reduce the risk:

- Try to make your home a nut-free zone.
- Avoid kissing or touching a person who has just eaten nuts. Wait for a period of two hours or get the person to wash their hands and brush their teeth.
- Teenagers should take special care when they are with friends who are nut eaters, especially when kissing or sharing bottles.
- Wipe down surfaces if you think nuts may have been present on them. It may be useful to have cleaning wipes with you when out and about.
- The nut allergic person should avoid handling bird feeds.
- The nut allergic child should not be given toys previously handled by a person who has been eating nuts.
The Nuts and Bolts of a nut allergy

- If you react to one type of nut, you should avoid that particular nut. There is also a one in three chance that you are allergic to other types of nuts, it is advisable that you are tested in an allergy clinic and receive appropriate advice.
- **Always carry identification (ID) with a list of your allergies e.g. Medic-Alert bracelet.**
- Build up your own personal range of ‘safe foods’ and ingredients.
- Tell family and friends about your allergy and ensure that they know what they should do if you have an allergic reaction.
- Read food labels carefully.
- Don’t be afraid to ask about ingredients when eating out.
- Have your medication with you at all times.
- Be able to recognise the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and know how to treat it.
- Have regular allergy check-ups with your allergy specialist.
- When travelling abroad get names of the nuts translated into the local language.
- If you are not sure about a food, leave it out!
Helpful sites

Anaphylaxis campaign
1 Alexandra Road
Farnborough
GU14 6BU
Helpline: 01252 542029
info@anaphylaxis.org.uk

Allergy UK
Planwell House
LEFA Business Park
Edginton Way
Sidcup
Kent, DA14 5BH
Helpline: 01322 619898
info@allergyuk.org

Food Standards Agency
UK Headquarters
Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London WC2B 6NH
Helpline: 020 7276 8829
helpline@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk
www.food.gov.uk [Accessed 9 Jan 2019]
Resources for your ID and allergy List

**Universal Medical ID**
0800 055 6540
info@universalmedicalid.com
www.universalmedicalid.co.uk

**MedicAlert**
01980 951045
info@medicalert.org.uk
www.medicalert.org.uk

**Local Contacts**

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Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: Paediatric Allergy Specialist Nurses, Child Assessment Unit, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 721356 or email PaediatricSpecialistNurses@york.nhs.uk.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.
Providing care together in York, Scarborough, Bridlington, Malton, Selby and Easingwold communities

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