

# Important Information Concerning Peanut Allergies

Anaphylaxis is a severe, often life-threatening allergic reaction that can be triggered by bug bites, bee stings and certain foods. Among the food triggers for anaphylaxis are some nuts and legumes, like peanuts.

Due to the potential severity of peanut allergies, it is imperative to practice meticulous diligence with regard to safeguarding an allergic person from potential contact with peanuts.

With the resulting stress from peanut caution, certain misconceptions about peanut allergies may arise.

One such misconception is that simply breathing in the aroma of peanuts can trigger an allergic reaction. According to The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network and a report authored by Dr. Michael C. Young, allergic reactions to food are triggered by specific food proteins. Without contact with these pro-

teins, there cannot be an allergic reaction.

Normal situations, such as a child sitting in a cafeteria where a peanut butter sandwich is present, cannot produce a reaction, despite misconceptions suggesting otherwise.

Food aromas do not contain any of the allergic trigger proteins.

That isn't to say that inhalation of airborne peanut proteins can't occur. However, these instances are rare and usually cause mild dermatologic or respiratory effects because of the relatively small dispersed amount of proteins in the air.

Airborne exposure can occur by peanut particles being released through the mass-shelling of peanuts, as might happen in a factory atmosphere. Also, the simultaneous opening of peanut packages in a pressurized environment, such as in an airplane cabin, could release peanut particles into the air.

Food proteins also can be aerosolized into a vapor phase from the high heating conditions of cooking, such as when steaming, boiling or frying. This is one of the more common ways for food protein to become airborne.

In terms of documented cases where the smell of peanuts was enough to trigger a reaction, experts surmise that this is a physiological response to smelling the peanuts.

Much in the way Pavlov's dogs learned to salivate at the ringing of a bell that would signal food, those with peanut allergies can have reactions merely at the sight or smell of peanuts.

These reactions can seem very real and similar to an actual case of anaphylaxis.

It's important to keep in mind that severe allergic reactions to peanuts are caused by consumption or skin contact with peanuts, not simply by breathing in peanut aromas.

Peanut Allergy Facts in a Nutshell

\* Peanuts are the leading cause of severe food allergic reactions, followed by shellfish, fish, tree nuts and eggs.

\* The American Peanut Council says that there are currently no cures for peanut allergies.

\* Reactions can begin and proceed rapidly, in extreme cases proving fatal within minutes. Severe sufferers must use epinephrine (i.e., adrenaline) to help prevent anaphylactic shock, says the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.

\* There are many hidden sources of peanuts in the foods we eat. Here are just some of the places you may find peanut products: Worcestershire sauce, Chinese egg rolls, curry sauces, bakery products (prepared on mixing equipment that has traces of peanuts), crack-

ers, cakes, various snacks and desserts, vitamin tablets (peanut oil), and candy (peanut oil).

\* As many as 1.5 million Americans have a peanut allergy.

\* PeanutAllergy.com reports that 25 percent of children grow out of their peanut allergies.

## Make Exercise Fun

Year in, year out, scores of people make getting in shape their New Year's Resolution.

But after a few weeks, many of those same people are back to their old behaviors, leaving the gym behind for some post-work couch time.

There's a host of things you can do to turn your exercise regimen from something you dread to something you really appreciate and look forward to.

• **Get a partner:** Many people find that working out with a partner is a good way to stay on schedule and stay motivated.

Also, going to the gym with a friend can be more enjoyable because you can joke around between sets or just talk as if you were sitting on the couch watching a movie.

• **Mix things up:** If your workouts don't involve isolating specific muscles each day (where Monday you'll work solely triceps and back, Tuesday legs and chest, etc.) but instead are more general and less strenuous, then you're bound to

get bored.

• **Play sports:** Workouts don't need to just include dumbbells and situps. If your office has a company softball team, join it.

Or if there's a local basketball league you can join, consider that as well. Also, getting out in the fresh air can help improve your state of mind.

• **Go outdoors:** Many state parks have workout stations along the trails you can walk.

While these don't include weights, they have stations for pull-ups, situps, stretching your legs, etc.

And if you're on trails, keep in mind the walk itself is great exercise, particularly if the trails feature some hills to climb. Again, the fresh air can be very rejuvenating as well.

• **Incorporate music:** Many exercise enthusiasts find that music is a perfect complement to their workouts. Time tends to go by a lot faster when you're listening to music.

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## Picky Eater Tips

If kids had their druthers, most would love to eat candy for breakfast, candy for lunch and pizza for dinner, with candy for dessert. Fortunately, parents typically don't leave it up to the kids to choose the menu.

But just because Mom and Dad choose the menu, that doesn't mean son or daughter have to like it. In fact, as any parent can attest, kids are often picky about what they eat, and that can be problematic for parents.

Getting kids to eat healthily is not only beneficial for kids' growth and present health, but good for their futures as well. Studies have shown that kids who eat healthy foods as children are likely to carry those positive eating habits with them into adulthood.

While turning a picky eater into less of a problem isn't always easy, the following tips should ease the transition from a picky eater into a more cooperative one.

\* **Provide healthy snacks.** Parents can often control what their kids eat at breakfast and dinner, and even lunch to a lesser extent. However, it's when children snack that they develop some of their worst eating habits.

Rather than sugar-heavy snacks such as candy, cookies and soda, keep healthy snacks around the house. Fruits and vegetables, low-fat or non-fat yogurt and even some low-fat cheeses are far healthier alternatives than traditional snacks that are heavy in sugar.

Instead of sodas, keep fresh fruit juices stocked in the refrigerator. Snacks and juices should be easily

accessible to kids.

\* **Incorporate exercise into your family's routine.** It's no secret adults and children alike should make time each day for exercise. Parents concerned about their child's picky or unhealthy eating habits might be able to combat those habits by incorporating daily exercise into the family routine.

For example, a nightly post-dinner walk around the neighborhood will discourage anyone from overeating. And once kids grow accustomed to exercising each day, they're more likely to realize they feel better when that exercise is coupled with a healthy diet.

\* **Parents can set the best example.** Kids, particularly younger children, learn most of their behaviors from Mom and Dad. When it comes to diet, parents must practice what they preach.

Kids won't be inclined to drink a healthy fruit drink if they see Mom or Dad reach for a soda when they're thirsty. However, if Mom or Dad reaches for a healthy choice when they're thirsty kids will likely follow suit.

The same goes for food. A child is not going to embrace eating vegetables if Mom or Dad never eat any veggies themselves. When it comes to kids and healthy eating habits, the best example a kid can have is seeing Mom or Dad making healthy choices.

\* **Don't be too strict.** Kids aren't going to eat the best foods all the time, and the occasional soda or candy bar isn't going to be too harmful. Choose when and where to allow kids the occasional treat they wouldn't otherwise get to eat.

