

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ALLERGY NETWORK (CYANS)

Patient information leaflet **Pulses and Legumes Allergy**

NOTE

This document has been prepared by Public Services Delivery Scotland (PSD Scotland) on behalf of CYANS. Accountable to Scottish Government, PSD Scotland works at the heart of the health service providing national strategic services to the rest of NHS Scotland and other public sector organisations to help them deliver their services more efficiently and effectively. The CYANS Network is a collaboration of stakeholders involved in care of patients with allergies, who are supported by a PSD Scotland Programme Team to drive improvement across the care pathway.

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Pulses and Legumes allergy

Legumes are a family of plants, many of which are foods, including peanut, peas and lentils. Edible legumes that can be dried then cooked later are also called **pulses**.

Allergy to peanut is well known, but allergy to other pulses/legumes is much less well known, even though it is quite common in Scotland.

Allergic reactions to pulses / legumes can be immediate and severe (including anaphylaxis). Some people are intolerant of these foods (they may cause bloating or diarrhoea, for example), but this is not the same as allergy and there is no risk of a serious reaction.

Avoiding pulses / legumes when you have an allergy is the key to reducing risk. With practice, this will become a habit, and you will become more confident about keeping your child safe.

It is difficult to predict who will have a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). For this reason, you should **discuss this allergy with your GP**, if you haven't already, who may then refer you to your local allergy clinic for further advice with or without testing. You should have an **allergy action plan**, and **allergy medicine** for unexpected reactions. For more on allergic reactions and anaphylaxis please see the [CYANS website](#).

Some people with pulse / legume allergy may just be allergic to one or two of them, other people may be allergic to many or all of them. Your health care professional will advise which ones to try, and which to avoid (allergy testing can help here).

You should not avoid any pulses / legumes or any other food "just in case", and certainly not if you have eaten it before without a problem. Only avoid ones you have seen possible reactions too.

Some children can react just to being near these foods being cooked, for example a boiling pot of soup. It would be very unusual however for them to have a severe reaction in this way.

Avoiding pulses and legumes

There are lots of different kinds of legumes. The easiest to recognise are those with the word "**pea**", "**bean**", or "**lentil**" in the name, and that look like a pea or a bean. Unfortunately, some legumes do not look like this, or else they are cooked into a mush or ground into flour, so may not be obvious to the eye.

Pea or chickpea (gram) protein/flour are often used in processed products and are likely to cause allergic reactions. Pea *starch* on the other hand typically contains less than 1% protein and is therefore unlikely to cause a reaction. Pea **fibre** is somewhere in the middle with about 6% protein.

Peas:	Beans:	Lentils:
Green, sugar snap, snow, green split, dried, yellow split, chickpea, marrowfat, mushy, blue, cow, pigeon	Haricot (white / navy bean), kidney, borlotti, cannellini, flageolet, turtle, marrow, pinto, black, broad, runner, French / green / string, mung, aduki / adzuki, black eyed, butter, Lima, Boston	Brown, green, white, yellow, puy, pardina

The following legumes are perhaps not so obvious from their names:

Food item	Description
Petit pois, Mangetout, green / yellow tuar / toor / tur / tuvar dhal	These are all kinds of pea
Garbanzo, Gram	Other names for chickpea
Masur / masoor dhal, urad / urid dhal	These are all kinds of lentil

The following are officially legumes but should be considered separately:

Soy or Soya*	Found as a flour (most bread contains some soya flour), also used to make soy sauce, and various vegetarian / vegan products. Also, commonly an additive in the form of soya lecithin - some people can eat this even though they react to other forms. Fresh or frozen green soya beans are also known as Edamame .
Peanut	A legume, rather than a tree nut. You can be allergic just to peanut and no other legumes. Some people are allergic to legumes but NOT allergic to peanut.
Lupin	Lupin flour is found in some baked goods e.g. waffles, ice cream cones, pastries, pies, breads, pizza bases, pancakes (especially ones imported from Europe).
Carob	Rarely a cause of allergy. Used as a chocolate alternative.
Tamarind	Rarely a cause of allergy. Used in sauces e.g. Brown sauce, Worcestershire sauce

Fenugreek	Rarely a cause of allergy. Seed used as a spice e.g. in Indian food.
Coffee, cocoa beans	Often referred to as beans, but NOT part of the legume family

Foods to avoid/check	
Cereals, rice and pasta	Any containing lupin, gram (chickpea), pea, lentil flour
Bread, cakes, biscuits, waffles	Any containing lupin, gram (chickpea), pea, lentil flour
Fruit	None
Vegetables	Mixed frozen / tinned vegetables may contain peas Vegetable burgers Vegetable soups Salads
Meat, fish and alternatives	Processed meat products containing pea protein / flour - hotdogs, chicken / pork slices, burgers, sausages Chilli con carne Vegetarian / vegan foods and meat substitutes commonly contain beans / peas / lentils / chickpeas e.g. sausages, burgers, pies. Baked beans in tomato sauce
Eggs	None
Fats and oils	None
Dairy alternatives	Often soya or pea e.g. Vbites "Cheezly" products, Tofutti, some dairy free yoghurts and ice creams (soya or pea)
Crisps, savoury snacks and nuts	Hummus (contains chickpeas) Falafel (contains chickpea or other beans) Poppadom / papadum / papad (lentil flour –can sometimes be eaten by people who are allergic to other lentil in other forms) Wasabi peas Bombay mix
Desserts, sweets and chocolates	Dairy free varieties can contain pea protein
Casseroles/stews/soups	Pea / beans
Indian, Chinese, Mexican food	Chilli (e.g. con carne) - kidney beans Chinese fried rice (pea) Biryani (peas), daal (lentils), onion bhaji, pakora (chickpea flour) Lentils sometimes ground up and used as spice Gram flour (chickpea) used in some Indian sweets

Food labels

The above list is not exhaustive. It is essential to check food labels, even if you have bought the product before, as ingredients can change without warning.

Peanut and soya in a food must be highlighted on an ingredient label (in bold or with a different background colour, for example), as they are one of the 14 food allergens recognised under [food labelling law](#). **This is not true of the other pulses / legumes**, which means you need to take extra care (get someone else to double check, for example).

Beware handling legumes in their dried form – they are sometimes used for art and crafts (shakers or collages, for example).

Eating out

Café, restaurant or take away food can cause problems for people with a food allergy. Food businesses must be able to supply information about any food they sell which contains peanut or soya, but not about other pulses/legumes. This information does not necessarily have to be printed on a menu, but they do have to be able to give you the necessary information if you ask. They can't just say "none of our food is suitable" or "this dish might have nuts in it". To make eating out easier, always plan ahead and discuss allergies before you arrive, and always ask staff directly (ideally the cook themselves) whether they can provide a safe meal. Further advice is at the [CYANS website](#).

Travel

Travelling when you have a food allergy can also cause problems. Shops and restaurants may be unfamiliar. Foods that look familiar may have different ingredients (even when the brand is the same). The names for foods in different languages can be confusing.

To make travel easier, always plan ahead and discuss allergies before you leave home, with both airlines and hotels, think about how you will deal with a foreign language, bring safe foods with you and make sure you always have your allergy plan and allergy medicines with you everywhere you go. Further advice is at the [CYANS website](#).

School / Nursery

Leaving your child in the care of another person, whether that is a family member or a nursery / school, can feel scary. Most of the time they will be happy to work with you to keep your child safe, which should include the details of what they can and can't eat, what an allergic reaction might look like and how to manage it (including having an allergy plan and allergy medicines).

Most local authorities will ask for information from your health care professional about the allergy or allergies. You should aim to have a discussion with the carer, nursery or school before their first day.

You should encourage your child to ask about what they are eating and tell people about their allergy or allergies from an early age, especially if they are likely to be allergic their whole life. This is especially important for when they are not in your care but with others, or in nursery/school. Even places that declare themselves “nut-free” cannot guarantee that a teacher, parent or other child will not accidentally bring something into school that your child is allergic to, and this may just give everyone a false sense of security.

Further advice is at the [CYANS website](#).

Allergy testing

Allergy blood or skin tests can help confirm allergy and can help predict which pulses / legumes are likely to be a problem and which not.

Tests sold or marketed as “intolerance” tests are not useful in confirming allergy. See [the CYANS website](#) for further details about allergy tests.

Testing can also help confirm whether a child is growing out of their allergy or not – this is unusual but possible.

Further support

A dietitian can help advise on nutrition and food safety skills, including reading ingredient labels, shopping, and eating out.

Some children with food allergies can become very fussy. Eating the same foods all the time might sound like a good way to reduce the risk of an allergic reaction, but it can give a false sense of security, and it's better for a child to learn good food safety skills, to try new foods and enjoy a range of different foods.

If you require further information, please contact nss.cyans@nhs.scot

CYANS

Pulses and Legumes Allergy

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