

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ALLERGY NETWORK (CYANS)

Patient information leaflet **Nut 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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Avoiding nuts

If you're allergic to nuts, you should **avoid all** nuts unless a qualified health professional has told you which nuts are safe. If you have been told the nuts that are safe to eat, eat them regularly and only when you are sure there is no risk of cross-contamination with the nut you are allergic to.

Peanuts

Although it's commonly called a nut, the peanut is a member of the legume family (also called pulses), which includes beans, peas, and lentils. It is also known as ground nut, earth nut, monkey nut, goober, ground pea and pinder. Peanut oil is also known as arachis oil. Some people can be allergic to other legumes as well as peanut, but you do not need to start avoiding other pulses if you have not had a reaction to them before.

Tree nuts

- almond (also in frangipane and marzipan)
- cashew
- hazelnut (cob nuts, filbert, praline)
- pecan (hickory nut)
- pistachio
- walnut
- brazil
- macadamia (Queensland nut)

Foods to avoid

Foods most likely to contain peanuts or tree nuts include:

- nut butters or pastes for example, peanut butter
- breakfast cereals and cereal bars for example, muesli, crunchy nut cornflakes
- cakes, biscuits, pastries for example, almond slice, chocolate chip cookies, Bakewell tart, battenberg cake
- desserts for example, trifle, pecan pie
- marzipan, praline, frangipane
- ice cream for example, pistachio
- chocolate, sweets for example, nut toffee, fruit and nut chocolate, nougat
- Italian food for example, Romesco sauce, pesto (if made with cashew)
- middle Eastern and Turkish food for example, baklava and similar sweets and pastries
- Indian cooking for example, curries, Peshwari naan, sweets
- Chinese, Thai, Malaysia, Indonesian cooking for example, satay, stir fries

- vegetarian products for example, veggie burgers, nut cutlet
- salad and salad dressings for example, Waldorf salad

Other foods

Some plants have 'nut' in their name, but they are not real nuts. These include:

- palm nuts and palm kernels
- pine nuts and pine kernels
- coconut
- nutmeg
- chestnut
- shea nut
- tiger nut

Sesame seed allergy is more common in children with peanut and or tree nut allergy. Allergy to other seeds is less common.

It's possible to have allergies to any of these but is not necessary to avoid these plants or seeds if you have a nut allergy.

Nut oils

Refined (meaning bleached and deodorized (to remove the smell)) peanut oil has had all the detectable peanut protein removed and should not cause an allergic reaction for most people with a peanut allergy. Food businesses often advise you to avoid eating their food if peanut oil has been used. You should avoid **unrefined** (meaning nothing has been removed), cold pressed, peanut, walnut, or other nut oils.

Unrefined peanut oil is most likely used in food restaurants such as Indian, Thai, and Chinese or take-aways. These foods may also be sold in the 'speciality' or 'gourmet' sections of supermarkets.

Some medicines for example, Naseptin® cream, contains peanut oil and includes a warning that they are not suitable for use if you are allergic to peanut.

Food labels

Manufacturers must highlight the presence of 14 allergens (something that can cause an allergy) including peanuts and tree nuts on food labels. Allergens may be listed in **bold**, *italics* or underlined. Food businesses also must supply allergy information on foods sold loose without packaging.

You should always check the ingredients list each time you buy foods as manufacturers may change their product ingredients without any indication on the packaging. The same brand of product made in a different country can have different ingredients.

Many foods are labelled 'may contain traces of nuts' or have a similar warning allergy label such as 'made in a factory where nuts are used' or 'unsuitable for nut allergy sufferers'. These foods have been produced in a way that accidental contamination (meaning it has been mixed with a nut product) during the production process is possible, for example, a production line that is used for both plain chocolate and nut containing chocolate. Manufacturers rarely list which nut or nuts might be in the food and will often not clarify whether it's peanut or a tree nut. Products produced in in-store supermarket bakeries may carry the same risk. The risk of any nut being included is probably low, and the amount of any nut contamination, even if this happens, may not be enough to trigger a reaction. The safest thing to do is avoid foods with any such warning label, but this is something to discuss with your allergy health professional.

Some companies now state on the label that they make products in a 'nut free zone'.

Nut free product list

You can get lists of nut free foods directly from food manufacturers and supermarket chains, or by downloading lists from their websites.

Cosmetics and creams that may contain nuts

Some personal care products such as soaps, moisturising creams and shampoos may contain nut oils. Creams containing nut oils applied to broken or inflamed skin may cause an allergic reaction. They are usually listed in the ingredients using the Latin name for the nut.

Name	Latin Description
Peanut	Arachis oil / Arachis hypogaea
Sweet almond	Prunus dulcis
Bitter almond	Prunus amara
Brazil nut	Bertholletia excelsa
Cashew nut	Anacardium occidentale
Hazelnut	Corylus rostrata / Corylus Americana or Corylus avellana
Macadamia nut	Macadamia ternifolia
Walnut	Juglans regia or Juglans nigra
Pistachio	Pistacia vera

Eating out

Eating out is fun, and part of normal life. However, make sure the meal does not include nuts, nut products or **unrefined** nut oil. A café or restaurant must tell you if any food they sell contains nuts. It does not have to be printed on a menu, however they can't say "None of our food is suitable" or "This dish might have nuts in it". Remember, the person taking your order, or your money may not be the best person to ask, if possible, talk to a manager, or even better, the chef.

You should take care if eating Indian, Chinese, Thai, and other Asian cuisine, vegetarian meals, or buffet meals where spoons can be shared between nut free and nut containing plates.

Parties

You should tell the person holding the party if you or your child has an allergy before the party but reassure them that you or your child can safely come if there are no nuts about. If this is a problem for the host, offer to give your child biscuits, cakes, and sweets they can eat. Remember to check that the contents of party bags do not contain nuts.

Important information

- it's essential to check food labels, even if you've bought the product before, as ingredients can change without warning
- always ask staff about the ingredients when eating food bought in a restaurant or takeaway
- remember that the names of some foods and sauces can be different in different countries, even English-speaking ones, for example the United States of America (USA)
- check medicines, toiletries, beauty products and laundry products
- beware of handling foods known to cause allergy in their dried form, for example for crafts, shakers and collages

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.

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.

Allergy testing

Allergy blood or skin tests can help confirm allergy.

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 need this leaflet in another format, please contact psd.contact-us@nhs.scot 0131 275 6000

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