

Addendum Guidelines for the Prevention of Peanut Allergy in the United States

Summary for Parents and Caregivers

Background

Peanut allergy tends to begin early in life and persist through adulthood. Allergic reactions to peanut can range from mild to severe and even life-threatening. To avoid these reactions, people with peanut allergy must be vigilant about the foods they eat and the environments they enter, which can be extremely stressful for them and for their families.

New Clinical Trial Results on Peanut Allergy Prevention

Recent scientific research has shown that peanut allergy can be prevented by introducing peanut-containing foods into the diet early in life. Researchers conducted a clinical trial called Learning Early About Peanut Allergy (LEAP) with more than 600 infants considered to be at high risk of developing peanut allergy because they had severe eczema, egg allergy, or both. The scientists randomly divided the babies into two groups. One group was given peanut-containing foods to eat regularly, and the other group was told to avoid peanut-containing foods. They did this until they reached 5 years of age. By comparing the two groups, researchers found that regular consumption of peanut-containing foods beginning early in life reduced the risk of developing peanut allergy by 81 percent.



A mother feeding her infant.

Development of Clinical Practice Guidelines

Based on the strength of the LEAP findings, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), part of the National Institutes of Health, worked with 25 professional organizations, federal agencies, and patient advocacy groups to develop clinical practice guidelines to address the prevention of peanut allergy. A panel of experts developed the Addendum Guidelines for the Prevention of Peanut Allergy based on the LEAP findings and other recent scientific research.

This fact sheet summarizes the guidelines and provides a starting point for conversations with your infant's healthcare provider about how best to prevent the development of peanut allergy.



Note that infants and small children should never be given whole peanuts due to the risk of choking. Introduce other solid foods into your infant's diet before trying peanut-containing foods.

Guideline 1

Guideline 1 recommends that if your infant has severe eczema, egg allergy, or both (conditions that increase the risk of peanut allergy), he or she should have peanut-containing foods introduced into the diet as early as 4 to 6 months of age. This will reduce the risk of developing peanut allergy.

Check with your infant's healthcare provider before feeding your infant peanut-containing foods. He or she may choose to perform an allergy blood test or send your infant to a specialist for other tests, such as a skin prick test. The results of these tests will help to determine if peanut should be introduced into your infant's diet and, if so, the safest way to introduce it. If your infant's test results indicate that it is safe to introduce peanut-containing foods, the healthcare provider may recommend that you introduce peanut-containing foods to your infant at home. Or, if you prefer, the first feeding may be done in the healthcare provider's office under supervision. On the other hand, testing may indicate that peanut should be carefully introduced at a specialist's facility or not introduced at all because your child may already have developed an allergy to peanut.

Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for introducing peanut-containing foods to your infant.

Guideline 2

Guideline 2 suggests that if your infant has mild to moderate eczema, he or she may have peanut-containing foods introduced into the diet around 6 months of age to reduce the risk of developing peanut allergy. However, this should be done with your family's dietary preferences in mind. If peanut-containing foods are not a regular part of your family's diet (and your infant does not have severe eczema, egg allergy, or both), do not feel compelled to introduce peanut at such an early stage.

Your child's healthcare provider can tell you whether your child's eczema is mild to moderate. You may then choose to introduce peanut-containing foods at home. However, if you or your healthcare provider prefer, the first feeding can be done in the provider's office under supervision.

Guideline 3

Guideline 3 suggests that if your infant has no eczema or any food allergy, you can freely introduce peanut-containing foods into his or her diet. This can be done at home in an age-appropriate manner together with other solid foods, keeping in mind your family's dietary routines and preferences as described in Guideline 2.

