

PEANUT ALLERGY HANDOUT

Peanut allergy is the most common life-threatening food allergy in children. It is often lifelong but a few children can outgrow a peanut allergy. The first sign that a child is peanut allergic is that they cannot stand the smell of peanuts or do not want to taste it.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction to peanut

An allergic reaction to a food usually begins within minutes but may be delayed for up to 4 hours. Typical allergic reactions to foods include hives, swelling, runny nose, sneezing, itchy watery eyes, coughing, choking, trouble breathing, abdominal cramps, or vomiting. The reaction can progress to anaphylaxis or even death and you cannot predict when a reaction is going to be severe or mild.

How to treat a peanut reaction

Benadryl – Give as soon as possible.

EpiPen. – Inject at first sign of a serious reaction or if you have experienced a severe reaction in the past use immediately. If your reaction is not initially severe do not use your EpiPen, however, please keep it should be close at hand.

In the El Paso area the foods which cause the most accidental allergic reactions to peanuts are:

1. Desserts - Chocolates, cookies, candies, ice cream
2. Chinese food- Cross contamination from cooking or mixing of different foods at buffets
3. Mole – Many non-native El Pasoans do not know that peanut butter is added to the chili
4. Parties - Halloween, Christmas and birthday parties are more dangerous for children because there are more likely to be peanut-containing foods eaten and less supervision

Foods manufactured in a facility that processes peanuts should be avoided!

One in ten products from these plants had detectable peanut protein. It is not worth the risk.

Peanut oil is safe.

Heat pressed peanut oil which is found at your local grocery store contains no peanut protein and is safe. Chick-Fil-A products can be eaten. Cold-pressed peanut oil which is very expensive and not found at the grocery store should be avoided as it contains peanut protein.

Peanut allergic patients can eat other nuts

- Peanuts and tree nuts are in different families. Your chance of being allergic to tree nuts is only slightly higher than you being allergic to any other kinds of food.
- Peanut allergic patients who can eat tree nuts should be aware that many nuts are processed in the same facilities and cross contamination occurs, so they should be

careful to eat tree nuts that are not contaminated like tree nuts cracked directly from the shell.

- We DO NOT recommend young child allergic to peanuts eat tree nuts as they cannot often tell what type of nut they are eating and do not know how to avoid cross contamination.

Can I react to the smell of peanuts?

Under normal circumstances a reaction to airborne peanut dust is very rare. An allergic reaction to food will not occur because someone is eating it in the classroom or vicinity of the allergic person. The main worry is that an allergic child might ingest peanuts by eating shared food, cross-contamination of common objects such as toys. There is no protein in peanut smell.

Enclosed areas such as the bars and restaurants like Logans and Texas Roadhouse may have large amounts of peanut in the air and should be avoided.

Airline travel is safe

Generally traveling by plane is safe as long as proper precautions are taken.

Preparation is key. Recommendations:

1. EpiPen should be out
2. Bring your own food
3. Clean the seat backs and arms rests with Clorox wipes before the allergic patient sits down
4. Tell the airline about the peanut allergy when booking, ask if peanuts are served, and request that peanuts not be served on that flight (Southwest airlines is the best at honoring this request)
5. A few people eating peanuts close to you are not a risk. The risk is from contaminated surfaces. However, if you do not feel comfortable with the possibility of peanut dust in the air the first flight of the day is when the airplane is likely to be the cleanest.

For more information

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network - <http://www.foodallergy.org>