



Allergy and Immunology

Tree Nut Allergy

The term tree nuts refers to nuts other than peanut and includes - **cashew, walnut, almond, pecan, pistachio, brazil nut, hazelnut and macadamia**. These nuts contain protein that can cause an allergic reaction for around 2% of children. The type and severity of reactions to tree nuts can vary together with peanut, tree nuts are the most common foods to cause anaphylaxis in Australia, particularly cashews.

Most people allergic to one tree nut do not have allergies to any other nuts but approximately 30% will have another tree nut allergy. Common coexisting tree nut allergies are cashew-pistachio and walnut-pecan. Your doctor will tell you which nuts you should avoid based on allergy testing, your child's age and severity of past reactions.

Will my child grow out of their tree nut allergy?

Around 10% of children with an allergy to any of the tree nuts may outgrow one or all of their allergies. The doctors will determine whether your child has outgrown any of the tree nut allergies by a combination of allergy testing and food challenge. Allergy testing may be periodically repeated to monitor your child's allergies. Challenges should only be performed by experienced medical staff with emergency resuscitation medications and facilities available.

Once your child is safely eating certain nuts it is advisable to continue to include them as a regular part of your child's diet. For younger children or those that do not like to eat nuts this can be done in a ground form added to other foods such as cereal, baked goods or yoghurt. Purchasing nuts in the shell is advised if you have concerns regarding potential contamination with other nuts your child may still be allergic to.

HOW DO YOU TREAT TREE NUT ALLERGY?

There is currently no cure for food allergy. If your child has confirmed allergy to any of the tree nuts avoiding foods that contain those tree nuts is the only way to prevent symptoms.

HOW SHOULD MY CHILD AVOID TREE NUTS?

This involves knowing the common food sources of tree nuts, how to read food labels and knowledge of possible sources of contamination with tree nut. Although tree nuts are a good source of protein, iron and some vitamins, removing them from the diet has little effect on overall nutritional intake for most children.

Sources of Treenut	Common Sources of Tree nuts (check carefully)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almonds • Almond Paste • Almond Meal • Amoretto • Artificial nuts • Bitter almond • Baklava, Greek pastry commonly containing walnut • Beer nuts • Brazil nuts • Bunya nuts • Candle nuts • Carponata (Italian dish that contains almonds) • Cashews • Gianduja • Hazelnut (Filbert or Cob Nut) • Indian nuts • Macadamia Nuts • Macaroons • Macadamia (Queensland nut, candlenut) • Mixed nuts • Non-gai nuts • Nut extract or flavourings • Nut meal • Nut oils • Nut spreads or butters • Pecan (Hickory Nut or Mashuga) • Pistachios • Shea nuts • Walnuts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baked goods such as cakes and slices • Biscuits and cookies • Breakfast cereals • Christmas Cakes and puddings • Chocolate • Chocolate spreads • Curry pastes • Dips and flavoured cheeses • Dried fruit and trail mixes • Dukkah • Energy mixes or trail mix • Fruit crumble mix • Flavoured coffee syrups • Icecream • Marzipan • Muesli bars and health bars • Natural flavourings • Nougat, fudge, praline, Rocky Road and Turkish delight • Pasta sauces • Pesto • Restaurant and Takeaway meals – especially Asian, African and Indian meals • Salads and salad dressings • Stuffing • Vegetarian meals

Products at high risk of being contaminated with tree nuts	Possible non-food sources of tree nut
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baked goods • Breakfast cereal • Chocolate • Ice creams • Restaurant or takeaway meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal and bird feeds • Cosmetics and massage oils

LABEL READING

Ingredients List

All packaged foods must have an ingredients list and it is law that all common food allergens (peanut, tree nut, seafood, fish, milk, eggs, soybeans and wheat) must be clearly identified, however small the amount.

Example: instead of simply listing pesto the ingredients list should read "pesto (cashew)". The product may also contain a statement at the end of the ingredients list which states "this product contains tree nuts"

ALWAYS check the ingredients list every time you buy the food as the ingredients of the product may change. Be aware that other words may be used for tree nuts in other countries. Sometimes the specific tree nut is not identified on labels

"May contain traces of tree nut" statements

These statements are used by manufacturers to indicate that the product may be contaminated with tree nut through processing and packaging. At present these statements are voluntary and there are no clear guidelines for companies regarding how and when to use them. The wording of the statements makes it very difficult to determine your level of risk and a product that does not contain the statement may be no safer than a product that does. The chances of having a severe allergic reaction through contamination during processing are extremely unlikely. However, people with severe or anaphylactic reactions should use these products with caution. The only safe alternative is extremely limiting as it would be to not include any commercial food products in your child's diet. For children with severe allergic reactions companies can be contacted directly to explore food processing, packaging and cleaning procedures.

Products labelled as "May be present" have undergone more robust assessment and should be avoided.

SOURCES OF CONTAMINATION WITH TREE NUT

Casual skin contact with tree nut is most unlikely to cause a significant reaction.

- Children may react as a result of contamination to cooking surfaces and utensils such as knives, kitchen sponges, barbecues and bench tops with tree nut.
- Margarine and butter containers can also be sources of contamination with nut products, especially nut pastes and spreads.
- Picking nuts out of foods may leave some amount of nut protein in the product and is not recommended.

- Crèche, day care centres and kindergartens may recommend hand washing after meals to prevent the transfer of trace amounts of nuts from hands to toys and craft materials etc.

Do I need to avoid the following foods when I have a tree nut allergy?

Food	Does it need to be avoided?
Nut oils	Refined nut oils (not cold pressed) have been shown to be safe for people with nut allergies as the protein is removed during processing. Unfortunately it can be difficult to determine how well the oil is processed. It is best to avoid all forms of nut oils if your child have a severe nut allergy.
Coconut and Nutmeg	NO. Coconut comes from the seed of the palm and nutmeg is obtained from the seed of the drupaceous fruit.
Water chestnuts	NO. Despite the name water chestnuts are not a nut and come from the edible portion of a plant root.
Chestnuts	Chestnuts are in a different botanical category to peanuts and also to tree nuts and most people with chestnut allergy can tolerate peanuts and tree nuts. Chestnut allergy has been reported but, is rare in Australia.
Pine nut	Pine nut is a seed and the majority of people with nut allergy can eat pine nuts. Other names for pine nut include (pinyon nuts and pignolia nuts).
Sesame Seeds	Allergy to sesame seed occurs in some children with a tree nut allergy. If your child has an allergic reaction to sesame seeds these should be avoided. Hummus dip and tahini are made from sesame seeds and should be avoided in sesame seed allergy.

EATING OUT

Many cuisines can contain tree nuts, particularly African, Asian, Indian, Chinese, Middle Eastern, Indonesian, Mexican and Thai. Eating at restaurants or buying takeaway meals is a common source of accidental exposure to tree nuts. Inform staff when booking at restaurants that you need to avoid nuts and when ordering clarify ingredients and cooking methods with the waiting staff or chef.

SCHOOL, PRESCHOOL AND CHILDCARE CENTRES

Children should take their own tree nut free food with them to school and should be discouraged from swapping or sharing food. Banning specific foods will not eliminate the risk of accidental exposure and cannot be enforced. However, food restrictions with appropriate education and communication,

may have a role to play in very young children who have insufficient maturity to protect themselves (eg: childcare through to early primary school or children with developmental delay). The use of peanut containing foods in cooking classes and science experiments is discouraged if there are children with peanut allergy in the class. Pay particular care to arrangements for out of the ordinary events such as school camps, excursions and fetes.

Communication of your child's allergies to teachers and carers through the use of Action Plans is essential.

For further information refer to:

ASCIA (The Australian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy) is the peak professional body of Clinical Immunologists and Allergists in Australia and New Zealand.

Their website contains a wide range of information including Guidelines for prevention of food anaphylactic reactions in schools, preschools and childcare centres and Action plans - www.allergy.org.au

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia: a non-profit organisation that provides information, training and support. Membership provides you with access to local support groups and seminars, quarterly newsletters and discounts on resources. Website contains outlines on each states policy on managing food allergies in schools, preschools and childcare facilities - www.allergyfacts.org.au

FSANZ (Food Standards Australia and New Zealand): for information on food labeling - www.foodstandards.gov.au

Disclaimer

The food and ingredient lists included in this resource are not exhaustive and may change, individuals with food allergy should always check food labels each time a product is purchased.

This resource is intended to accompany a medical consultation regarding the management of a diagnosed food allergy.