



PEANUT ALLERGY

The peanut industry is aware of concerns surrounding food allergies. While peanuts are a healthy, nutritious food for the majority of the population, for a small number of people (approximately .6 percent of the population), peanuts can cause allergic reactions.

A food allergy is a reaction to an otherwise harmless food or food component that involves the body's immune system. Foods most commonly associated with allergy are peanuts, tree nuts, fish, crustaceans, milk, eggs, soy and wheat. A reaction occurs when the immune system responds abnormally to the protein or proteins in that particular food. The body reacts by flooding the system with histamines and other chemicals to fight off what is perceived as an invader to the body. Reactions can include upper respiratory problems, hives or eczema, upset stomach, asthma attack, or in rare cases anaphylactic shock that can result in death if not treated promptly.

Although anyone can develop a food allergy, the tendency toward allergic reactions is largely inherited. Where there is an immediate family history of atopic disorders (such as asthma or eczema) or other allergies, children may have two to four times the likelihood of developing a food allergy as children from families without allergic parents.

Members of the peanut industry continue to support and implement programs to manage food allergies:

- The peanut industry supports comprehensive product labeling in clear, simple language to ensure that consumers make informed choices about the products they eat. The peanut industry endorses the Food Allergy Labeling Guidelines developed by the Food Allergy Issues Alliance and submitted to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.
- The peanut industry advocates Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP's), HACCP initiatives and comprehensive employee training and education designed to prevent cross contact in the manufacturing process.
- The peanut industry aggressively supports and funds efforts to develop a peanut allergy vaccine as well as drugs to inhibit allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. The industry also supports research to identify individuals likely to have severe reactions to peanuts and research to identify factors that contribute to the development of peanut allergies.
- The peanut industry supports educational outreach programs to help peanut sensitive individuals manage their allergy in out-of-home environments such as schools and restaurants.
- The peanut industry advocates the carrying of self-injectable epinephrine (Epi- Pen) for food allergic individuals and supports educational efforts to encourage the availability of EpiPens for medical emergency units, schools, airplanes, and other public facilities.

For further information, please contact the American Peanut Council office in Alexandria, VA (Tel: 703-838-9500; email: info@peanutsusa.com).

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