



## **Eating Peanuts in Pregnancy and While Breastfeeding**

In the United States, Canada and Europe, precautionary guidance that pregnant and breast feeding women might wish to avoid consuming peanuts has been withdrawn and should no longer be followed. This is because research found insufficient evidence that avoiding peanuts was effective in reducing the increasing levels of peanut allergy.<sup>1</sup> In addition, avoiding peanut products was also felt to be overly restrictive for the dietary quality and food choices available to mothers and their young children.<sup>2</sup>

From 2009, the consensus of guidance in North America, Europe and Australasia is that pregnant or breastfeeding women can choose to eat peanuts or foods containing peanuts, provided they are not peanut allergic themselves. It does not matter that another blood relation to the mother or young child may themselves have an allergy to peanuts. They should consult with their doctor to determine the best nutrition strategy for their specific situation.

Here is an example of the positive message about eating peanuts during pregnancy and while breast feeding that is now given to the public:

You may have heard that some women, in the past, have chosen not to eat peanuts when they are breastfeeding. This is because the Government previously advised women that they may wish to avoid eating peanuts when they are breastfeeding if there was a history of allergy in their child's immediate family (such as asthma, eczema, hayfever, food allergy or other types of allergy), in case small amounts of peanut in their breast milk increased the chance of the baby developing a peanut allergy. But this advice has now been changed because the latest research has shown that there is no clear evidence to say that eating or not eating peanuts when breastfeeding affects the chances of your baby developing a peanut allergy.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hourihane JO, Aiken R, Briggs R, et al. 2007. "The impact of government advice to pregnant mothers regarding peanut avoidance on the prevalence of peanut allergy in United Kingdom children at school entry". *J Allergy Clin Immunol*;119(5): 1197-202; Greer FR, Sicherer SH, Burks AW 2008. American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Nutrition; Section on Allergy and Immunology. "Effects of early nutritional interventions on the development of atopic disease in infants and children: the role of maternal dietary restriction, breastfeeding, timing of introduction of complementary foods, and hydrolyzed formulas". *Pediatrics* ;121(1):183-191; UK Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment 2008. "Statement on the Review of the 1998 COT Recommendations on Peanut Avoidance"

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Paediatric Society 2013. "Dietary exposures and allergy prevention in high-risk infants". *Paediatr Child Health*;18(10):545-9; Thygarajan A, Burks AW 2008. "American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations on the effects of early nutritional interventions on the development of atopic disease". *Curr Opin Pediatr*; 20(6):698-702

<sup>3</sup> UK Food Standards Agency 2009, "Peanuts during pregnancy, breastfeeding and early childhood"

[www.food.gov.uk/policy-advice/allergyintol/peanutspregnancy#.UwJ\\_DPI\\_uSo](http://www.food.gov.uk/policy-advice/allergyintol/peanutspregnancy#.UwJ_DPI_uSo)



Research is ongoing into the hypothesis that early allergen exposure, including to peanuts, may increase the likelihood of tolerance and thereby lowers the risk of childhood food allergy.<sup>4</sup> The LEAP - Learning Early About Peanut Allergy – study published in February 2015 demonstrated that consumption of a peanut-containing snack or peanut butter by infants at high-risk for developing peanut allergy substantially prevented the subsequent development of allergy by age five.<sup>5</sup>

The American peanut industry supports efforts to educate consumers about how to manage food allergies. It also funds research into the cause and prevention of peanut allergies, although for the vast majority of consumers, peanuts and peanut butter are healthy food choices. They are rich in nutrients including protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals.

For more information on all of these topics see [www.peanutsusa.com/food-safety/allergy-information.html](http://www.peanutsusa.com/food-safety/allergy-information.html) and [www.peanutallergyfacts.org](http://www.peanutallergyfacts.org)

Approved 6/20/14. For further information, please contact the American Peanut Council office in Alexandria, Va. at: Tel: 703-838-9500; email: [info@peanutsusa.com](mailto:info@peanutsusa.com).

Disclaimer: This statement is not intended as a substitute for expert medical advice and is believed to be correct at the time of publication. The American Peanut Council recommends anyone wishing to find out more about food allergies to make contact with one of the specialist food allergy organizations.

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<sup>4</sup> Frazier AL, , Camargo CA, Malspeis S, Willett WC, Young MC 2014. "Prospective Study of Peripregnancy Consumption of Peanuts or Tree Nuts by Mothers and the Risk of Peanut or Tree Nut Allergy in Their Offspring" *JAMA Pediatrics* 168(2):156-162.

<sup>5</sup> - Du Toit G et al, 2015. "Randomized Trial of Peanut Consumption in Infants at Risk for Peanut Allergy". *New England Journal of Medicine* 372:803-813