

# introducing food allergens

A DIETITIAN DESIGNED WEANING GUIDE





# Introduction

Introducing foods which are known to cause food allergy to your baby or child can seem scary. It's only natural to worry, and this isn't helped by all the conflicting information on social media and the internet about what you should and shouldn't do.

The advice around when to give foods like peanut and other allergens to babies has changed hugely in the past decade. We now know that giving peanuts and other food allergens early to babies can help to reduce food allergy risk!!

This guide will give you the low down on the current guidance followed by practical advice and helpful tips to help you introduce common allergenic foods to your baby's diet with confidence and ease.

# a little background



Let's start with a little background... In recent years there has been a huge shift in the advice given to prevent food allergy. Previously, parents were advised to **avoid, avoid, AVOID!!** peanuts and other potentially allergenic foods (like egg and nuts) during pregnancy and early childhood through fear of food allergy. Despite this advice, the incidence of food allergy in the UK actually went up! This was picked up by researchers and, one study group in particular observed that the risk of peanut allergy was 10 times as high among Jewish children living in the UK than it was in Israeli children of similar ancestry. The difference being that Israeli babies commonly eat peanut containing snacks (such as Bamba) from as early as 4 months of age and this was the opposite of what babies in the UK were being advised to do! We now know the science was wrong and that by giving peanuts and other food allergens early the body can learn to see them as safe and tolerate them.

# Introducing peanuts...

## And other food allergens



### high risk

A baby is high risk if:

- they have eczema (especially if it is very bad eczema) or
- They already have a pre-existing food allergy, such as cow's milk allergy or soya allergy

- High risk' infants may benefit from early weaning (from 4 months of age) of potential food allergens including egg and peanut, as soon as they are developmentally ready
- This means not waiting until 6 months to start weaning which is the the current UK advice

### everyone else

- Exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months of age (current UK advice)
- When developmentally ready start weaning and include foods commonly associated with food allergies
- Common food allergens are: egg, all other nuts, milk and dairy foods, fish and seafood, sesame, wheat, and soya
- Aim to introduce these allergenic foods before 1 year of age

The above is a guide is based on the guidance by BSACI/FASG and is correct and up to date at the time of publication only. If your baby already has a food allergy, or moderate to severe eczema, speak to a healthcare or feeding professional before starting weaning. Only give your baby foods in a form that is appropriate for their age and developmental stage, to avoid risk of choking. Always supervise your baby whilst they are eating.

Full guidance can be found here:

BSACI + BDA: <https://www.bsaci.org/professional-resources/resources/early-feeding-guidelines/>

SACN + FSA: <https://cot.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/jointsacncotallergystatementfinal2.pdf>



# Introducing peanuts...



## Tips

- Start with a small amount
- Observe for at least 2 hours and be mindful of any new symptoms for up to 2 days after tasting peanut for the first time
- Wait 2 full days before introducing any new common food allergens
- Gradually build up amount offered once you are sure no reaction has occurred!

## Try

- Try 1/2 teaspoon of smooth peanut butter mixed into one teaspoon of breast milk or formula to make a loose consistency
- This can be offered from a spoon or stirred into yoghurt, porridge, mashed fruit or veg, or offered on a spoon to taste

## How to offer peanut:

- Offer smooth peanut butter or ground peanuts added to food
- ⚠️ Avoid whole nuts, or chunky peanut butter due to choking hazard in babies
- Smooth peanut butter on its own can also be challenging for babies to manage. Mix well with milk or other food



## **Peanut butter breakfast oats**

### **You need**

For porridge:

- 30g porridge oats
- 150-200mls of your baby's milk (formula, expressed milk, an unsweetened oat milk, or whole cows milk\*)
- 1/4-1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

For peanut tasting:

- 1/2-2 teaspoons of smooth peanut butter (no added salt or sugar)
- 1 teaspoon of breast milk or formula milk

### **To make**

1. Add all the porridge ingredients to a sauce pan, bring to the boil then turn the heat down and simmer stirring throughout for 5-6 mins, or until the liquid has absorbed and the oats are nice and soft. Allow to cool a little before serving!
2. Serve up baby's portion of oats into a small bowl (makes more than one baby portion - or to share with mum or dad!)

For peanut tasting:

1. Mix 1/2 teaspoon of smooth peanut butter into one teaspoon of breast milk or formula to make a loose consistency
2. Stir this through your baby's porridge or offer on a spoon or a clean finger to lick!

## **Peanut butter and blackberry yoghurt pot**

### **You need**

2 tablespoons of full fat Greek yoghurt (or other yog / yog alternative)

1 teaspoon smooth peanut butter

1/2 tsp chia seeds

1 or 2 frozen blackberries, sliced in half or mashed

### **To make**

1. Mix together the peanut butter and yoghurt
2. Serve topped with a sprinkle of chia seeds and the blackberries!

## **Peanut butter overnight oats**

### **You need**

30g oats

1 heaped tablespoon of full fat Greek yoghurt (or other yog / yog alternative)

30mls oat milk (or any milk)

1 tsp chia seeds

1 teaspoon smooth peanut butter

1 tsp linseeds

Small handful of frozen raspberries

### **To make**

1. Add all ingredients to a pot and stir to combine fully. Place the pot in the fridge overnight. You can eat straight from the fridge the next day or allow the oats to sit for 20 mins or so at room temp first

Allergen info: contains yoghurt (milk), chia (seeds), linseeds (seeds), peanut butter (peanut)



## **Peanut and tahini sauce**

### **You need**

(Scale up portions as needed)

1 tablespoon of tahini

1 tablespoon of smooth peanut butter

1/4 tsp chilli flakes or a mild chilli finely diced

1 tablespoon of rice vinegar

1 lime, juiced

A dash of low salt soy

1-2 tablespoons of water or only as needed

### **To make**

1. Add all sauce ingredients, except the water, to a bowl and whisk until smooth or add to a blender and whizz until smooth. Add water as needed to get the consistency right

In babies use this sauce to dip steamed or roasted veg, for example: roasted carrots, steamed broccoli, roasted cauliflower

Allergen info: contains tahini (sesame), peanut butter (peanut), soy sauce (soya)

## **Peanut pancakes**

### **You need**

1 ripe banana

2 tablespoons of olive oil, extra for cooking

2 tablespoons of smooth (runny) peanut butter

120g wholemeal flour\*\* (or any other plain flour)

1 teaspoon of baking powder

170mls oat milk or another plant-based milk

### **To make**

1. Mash the banana using a fork in a mixing bowl then stir through the oil and peanut butter until well combined (add to a blender if the peanut butter is too thick)
2. Add the flour and baking powder, and stir to combine
3. Gradually add the milk stirring as you go until you have a nice runny consistency
4. Preheat a little oil in a pan on a medium high heat, when hot turn the heat down to medium and add the mix one spoon at a time. Leave for 2-3 mins then flip over and finish off for a min or two on the other side, then remove from the pan
5. Serve with a dollop of full fat yoghurt, some fresh fruit and a sprinkling of baby granola (see nuts recipes)

**Allergen info: contains flour (wheat) peanut butter (peanut)**



# More ideas for peanuts...



## Older infants/ when developmentally ready

- Smooth peanut butter on toast
- Ground peanuts or smooth peanut butter added to sauces, stews/soups and curries
- Add smooth peanut butter to a savoury biscuit, muffin or flapjack recipe
- Make peanut butter pancakes
- Try a smooth peanut butter satay style sauce and serve with a main meal

## If on or before 6 months

- Try 1/2 teaspoon of smooth peanut butter mixed with 1 teaspoon breast milk or formula milk to make a loose consistency which can be offered on a spoon
- Smooth peanut butter mixed in with some pureed/mashed fruit or vegetables e.g. sweet potato mash
- Stir finely ground peanuts into oat porridge, yoghurt, or mashed/pureed veg and fruit





# Introducing egg...



## Tips

- Start with a small amount
- Observe for at least 2 hours and be mindful of any new symptoms for up to 2 days after tasting peanut for the first time
- Wait 2 full days before introducing any new common food allergens
- Gradually build up amount offered once you are sure no reaction has occurred!

## Try

- Omelette (try cut into finger sized strips)
- Scrambled eggs (mashed or blended with some of your babies usual milk)

## How to offer peanut:

- Choose fresh, in date, British lion stamped eggs
- If not using British lion stamped eggs, only use well cooked or hard boiled egg (no lightly scrambled eggs or runny yolks)



# More ideas for egg...



## Older infants/ when developmentally ready

- Try soft or hardboiled egg cut into fingers
- Egg cooked into pancakes or into a savoury muffin recipe
- Try a veggie frittata

## If before 6 months

- If trying on or before 6 months: Try mashed or blended scrambled egg or omelette.
- You can also mash/blend cooked egg into other pureed food like vegetables or rice



## **Banana + oat pancakes**

### **You need**

1 ripe banana

125ml oat milk or other milk of your choice

2 eggs, whites and yolks separated

100g whole rolled oats

2 teaspoons of baking powder

Olive oil or similar for cooking

### **To make**

1. Put all the ingredients apart from egg whites and cooking oil, into a blender and whizz until smooth
2. Whisk egg whites to form a stiff peak
3. Fold in the eggs to the pancake batter
4. Preheat a little oil in a pan on a medium high heat, when hot turn the heat down to medium and add the mix one spoon at a time. Leave for 2-3 mins then flip over and finish off for a min or two on the other side, then remove from the pan
5. Serve with a dollop of full fat yoghurt and fresh banana slices

Allergen info: contains eggs







# Introducing nuts...



## Tips

- Start with a small amount
- Observe for at least 2 hours and be mindful of any new symptoms for up to 2 days after tasting peanut for the first time
- Wait 2 full days before introducing any new common food allergens
- Gradually build up amount offered once you are sure no reaction has occurred!

## Try

- Try 1/2 teaspoon of smooth nut butter mixed into one teaspoon of breast milk or formula to make a loose consistency
- This can be offered from a spoon or stirred into yoghurt, porridge, mashed fruit or veg, or offered on a spoon to taste

## How to offer nuts:

- Offer smooth nut butter or ground nuts added to food
- ⚠️ Avoid whole nuts, or chunky nut butter due to choking hazard in babies
- Smooth nut butter on its own can also be challenging for babies to manage. Mix well with milk or other food



# More ideas for nuts...



## Older infants/ when developmentally ready

- Smooth nut butter on toast like almond butter or cashew butter
- Smooth nut butter or ground nuts stirred into porridge, oats or stirred through natural yoghurt
- Nut butter pancakes, muffins or savoury biscuits
- Nut pestos like cashew nut or walnut pesto!
- Check out my super green blend recipe and others

## If before 6 months

- Try 1/2 teaspoon of smooth nut butter like almond butter or cashew butter mixed with 1 teaspoon breast milk or formula milk to make a loose consistency which can be offered on a spoon
- Smooth nut butter mixed in with some pureed/mashed fruit or vegetables e.g. sweet potato mash
- Stir finely ground nuts into oat porridge, yoghurt, or mashed/pureed veg and fruit



## **Super green blend**

### **You need**

160g broccoli florets

160g fresh green peas (shelled)

50mls extra virgin olive oil

100mls any milk of your choice

One large handful of basil (large stalks removed)

30g

2 garlic cloves, peeled

80g cashew nuts

### **To make**

1. Steam (or boil) the broccoli and peas for 5 mins or until just tender then drain and add to a blender
2. Add all remaining ingredients to the blender and whizz until smooth (ensure no chunks of cashew left!)
3. Spoon into ice cube trays to be frozen and used later

Tips: defrost and warm through for a delicious and nourishing puree, as a pasta sauce, mashed into veg or as a toast or bagel topping. More milk can be added to loosen the texture if you want to be able to pour the mix more easily

Makes ~8 x 60ml cubes

Allergen info: contains cashew (nut)







## **Creamy cashew pasta**

### **You need**

(serves 4 adults or lots of little people - depending on who you're feeding!):

- 150g cashew nuts
- 150 ml water
- black pepper (in a grinder)
- extra virgin olive oil
- 1 brown onion (chopped)
- 3 garlic cloves (chopped)
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 2 tablespoons harissa paste
- pasta cooked to packet instructions
- a few finely chopped basil leaves to serve
- a handful of pine nuts to serve (for adults and the over 5's)

### **To make**

1. Add the cashews to the water and blend in a high powered blender until smooth. Season with ground black pepper.
2. Heat a drizzle of oil in a large pan on medium heat. Add the onion and garlic. Cook for 7-8 mins until the onion is softened. Add the chopped tomatoes, paprika and harissa to the onion and garlic. Increase the heat and bring to a boil then turn down the heat to low and simmer for 10 mins.

3. Cook the pasta according the packet instructions.
  4. Drain. Drizzle with olive oil and leave in the pan
  5. Add the tomato and onion mix to the blender with the blended cashews and blitz until smooth
  6. Stir the sauce through the pasta in the pan and warm through  
a little before serving! Top with the torn basil leaves and a few pine nuts for adults and any over 5's!
- Allergen info: contains cashew (nut), pasta (wheat)



## **Walnut crumb**

### **You need**

100g walnuts

### **To make**

1. Add to a high power blender and whizz until a fine dust consistency
2. Sprinkle on food or stir into sauces, yoghurt or smoothies

Allergen info: contains walnuts (nuts)

## **Baby granola**

### **You need**

6 spoons whole oats

4 heaped tablespoons pumpkin seeds

50g cashews

### **To make**

1. Heat the grill to medium high. Add all ingredients to a grill pan / baking tray. Toast for 2 mins then remove and allow to cool a little before adding to a high power blender. Whizz until a fine powder is formed
2. Sprinkle on top of full fat Greek yogurt, dip fruit slices into it or stir through smoothie bowls





# Introducing other allergens...

- **Cow's milk:** Fresh whole cow's milk can be added during cooking e.g. to oat porridge, mashed potato, white sauce. Or try a full fat natural yoghurt like Greek yoghurt.
- **Sesame:** Try hummus (made with blended sesame paste – tahini), sesame seeds added to yoghurt or oats, tahini dressings added to main meals, or tahini mixed in with mashed or blended vegetables
- **Wheat:** Depending on age or stage of child, try whole or blended pasta, couscous, toast slices, breadsticks
- **Fish & seafood:** Ensure cooked well and boneless. Try pureed, mashed or whole pieces of fish such as salmon or cod, and seafood like prawns and squid
- **Soy:** Try soy bean mash, tofu strips, soy milk and soy yoghurt.

## Tips:

- Start with a small amount
- Observe for at least 2 hours and be mindful of any new symptoms for up to 2 days after tasting a new allergen for the first time
- Wait 2 full days before introducing any new common food allergens
- Gradually build up amount offered once you are sure no reaction has occurred!





# Practical tips for introducing allergens!

1

## #1. One at a time

Introduce one new food at a time. Watch for any signs of a reaction

2

## #2. Start small

Start with a small amount e.g. ½ teaspoon at first. Increase the amount slowly over the next few days

3

## #3. Frequent consumption

Once introduced, continue to give the food regularly, e.g. a few times a week

4

## #4. Be flexible

If your baby doesn't seem interested, try again on another day

5

## #5. The 3-day rule

Leave at least 3 days in between introducing each new potentially allergenic food. Delayed reactions can show up to 2-3 days after eating the food





## **a note on** baby-led weaning

'Baby-led' weaning is when babies are encouraged to explore food independently from the start. Typically family style food is offered in whole pieces, or 'finger food' style, rather than being pureed or mashed. Babies are encouraged to self-feed rather than by being spoon-fed by someone else.

The skills required for a baby to self-feed (being able to sit independently, and look at food, pick it up and put it in their mouth) often show later than those required to be spoon fed puree/mashed food typically appearing around 6 months or so.

If you decide to wean early before 6 months your babies meals may need some adapting to make them safe e.g. blending or mashing.



# Conclusion

This guide is based on the guidance by BSACI/FASG and is correct and up to date at the time of publication only. If your baby already has a food allergy, or moderate to severe eczema, speak to a healthcare or feeding professional before starting weaning. Only give your baby foods in a form that is appropriate for their age and developmental stage, to avoid risk of choking. Always supervise your baby whilst they are eating.

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for more information on feeding and more resources