

## PEANUT BUTTER AND KIDS

By

**Dr. Sudha Chandrasekhar, MD, FAAP**

**Neva Schwartz, CPNP**

**Gateway Pediatrics PLLC**

**655 S. Dobson Rd. Ste B218, Chandler, AZ 85224**

**580-963-6668**

Peanut butter has been a mainstay in children's diets for many years. It has been a major source of protein that we in Pediatrics have suggested, especially for those little ones who didn't like or eat meat.

But in recent years, there has been an increase in the number of children becoming allergic to peanuts. In fact, you often see notices on school doors saying "we are a peanut free school" because they have a student with a severe allergy to peanuts. Peanut allergy is not the most common (eggs and milk are) but their reactions are generally more severe and less likely to be "outgrown".

It is believed that if the introduction of a potentially allergenic food is delayed until 3 years, there is a decreased chance of that child developing an allergy to it. This has prompted many to advise withholding peanuts and peanut butter (and shellfish) from a child's diet until he is 3 years of age.

Some children are at **increased risk** of developing a peanut allergy.

They are:

- \* Children who have an allergy or intolerance to another food, formula or milk
- \* Children who have other "allergy" disorders such as asthma, eczema, or allergic rhinitis ("hay fever") or there are family members with those disorders
- \* Children who have family members who have food allergies.

Researchers suggested several reasons for the increase:

- Consumption of peanuts by women during pregnancy.
- Infants exposed to peanut through breast milk, which may contain major peanut allergens.
- An increase in the number of families who become vegetarian or supplement their diet with vegetarian foods, often containing nuts, particularly peanuts.



### Nut Allergy 911

The symptoms of a nut or peanut allergy can often become serious very quickly. Get medical help immediately if you have difficulty breathing; difficulty swallowing; swelling of the lips, tongue, and throat or other parts of the body; and dizziness.

Some advise that if there is no history or concern about allergies, that peanut butter can be offered. HOWEVER, there is no guarantee that your child will not develop an allergy to peanuts or shellfish. In fact, your child can have no risk factors and you can do everything "right" and your child can still develop a food allergy. Frustrating but true.

So what it all boils down to is this: To be safest, peanuts and peanut butter are best avoided until 3 years of age.

For more information on peanut allergy, check out:

Kid's Health:

[http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/health\\_problems/allergiesimmune/nut\\_allergy.html](http://www.kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems/allergiesimmune/nut_allergy.html)

Food Allergy Network: <http://www.foodallergy.org/allergens/peanut.html>