



Before the new legislation arrives in October, we're looking at each allergen in detail. To download and print the allergen factsheets, head to our website: brws.it/allergenpack

Allergens: nuts, peanuts and sesame

We look at the next three allergens in our series and how to work with them safely

Nut, peanut and sesame allergies usually present first in young children, however, increasing numbers of adults suffer too. And just because you have a reaction to one type of nut or seed, it doesn't mean a person will be allergic to all of them.

These three allergies can be very serious and are becoming more common. They can cause a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction that requires immediate, emergency treatment.

Sesame seeds, now one of the top 10 causes of food allergies, are present in bakery, pre-packed foods and even drinks; however, there are plenty of delicious, safe alternatives packed with texture and taste.



BE AWARE OF THE SYMPTOMS

Nut and seed allergies can provoke a very serious, sometimes fatal, reaction. If customers have the following symptoms after eating, phone 999: difficulty breathing, swelling of the lips or throat, wheezing, itchy skin, tingling lips, tightening throat, sudden coughing, flushing, nausea, abdominal pain.



The countdown is on. Make sure you're ready for the 2021 allergen law change. Read more here: brws.it/allergens

07 NUTS

Having a tree nut allergy does not automatically mean an allergy to peanuts, although it is not uncommon to be allergic to both. Allergies to tree nuts tend to be persistent and it is rare for people to grow out of them.

Tree nuts such as almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pistachios and walnuts are widely used in many cuisines, including Chinese, Indian and Thai.

Look out for:

- Chinese, Indian and Thai curry pastes and sauces can contain nuts such as cashews or ground almonds
- Biscuits, pastries and cakes – even chocolate brownies – often have nuts as ingredients. Also be wary of breakfast spreads, treats like Ferrero Rocher (hazelnut), Toblerone (almond) and nougat
- Muesli-type cereals, breakfast bars and cereals such as honey nut cornflakes
- Lots of ice cream and desserts contain flaked nuts
- Some foods containing nuts are not as obvious as you think – for example, butters, toppings for salads and sauces such as pesto
- Refined oils are highly processed so there's a reduced risk, but unrefined or cold pressed oils should be avoided. Check the ingredients of vegetable oils as they can contain nut traces.

08 PEANUTS

Peanuts grow underground and are a legume from a different family of plants to tree nuts. They cause an allergic reaction when the immune system reacts to the protein in them. This affects one in 50 children in the UK and is on the rise, with only one in five outgrowing it.

Cross-contamination can occur when a nut-free food comes into contact with even the smallest trace of nut protein during manufacturing, storage or preparation.

People with an existing peanut allergy are around 40% more likely to develop a tree nut allergy, as similar proteins are found in both.

Look out for:

- Asian and Indian cuisines often use peanuts in dishes such as pad Thai, korma and satay, so look out for them in ready-made sauces or pastes
- Muesli and cereals can contain peanuts
- Check the label. Peanuts from outside the EU are not required to include the name as a highlighted food allergen and can be listed as arachis hypogaea, beer nuts, cacahuete, Chinese nuts, earthnuts, groundnuts, goober nut, madelonas or monkey nuts.



09 SESAME

Mild and sweet sesame seeds come from the sesame fruit, which grows on the sesame plant and is native to Asia and East Africa.

The increasing popularity of sesame in dishes such as hummus explain why more and more children are developing this once rare allergy. It may not receive as much publicity as a peanut allergy, but is no less serious.

The seed in itself is not allergenic, but if it's broken or squashed to make a paste or sesame snacks, the allergy-causing protein is released.

Look out for:

- An extremely potent allergen, sesame seed is often masked in stir-fries, curries and risottos, and is common in bread and other bakery products
- The range of foods sesame can be found in is extensive: from baked goods, biscuits, crackers, breadsticks, rice cakes, bagels and muesli to pre-packed noodles, dips, soups, sausages and samosas
- Salad dressings, spreads and chutneys can also feature sesame as an ingredient
- Herbal drinks may contain sesame's liquefied seed
- Bread and patisserie counters can be easily contaminated with sesame seeds, therefore it's important to be conscious of this if you have products which contain the seed
- Sesame oil, often found in Asian meals, is made by cold-pressing the seeds and so is also highly allergenic.



Nut and sesame substitutes

Nut and sesame products' unique selling points are their texture and earthy taste, but equally healthy and tasty substitutes such as pumpkin seeds, chickpeas, sunflower and soy butter are all growing in popularity.

Beans and lentils can add body to any dish while edamame beans, chia and sunflower seeds are great alternatives, too.



FIND OUT MORE

Always refer to the Food Standard Agency's website for the most up-to-date allergen information: brws.it/fsa