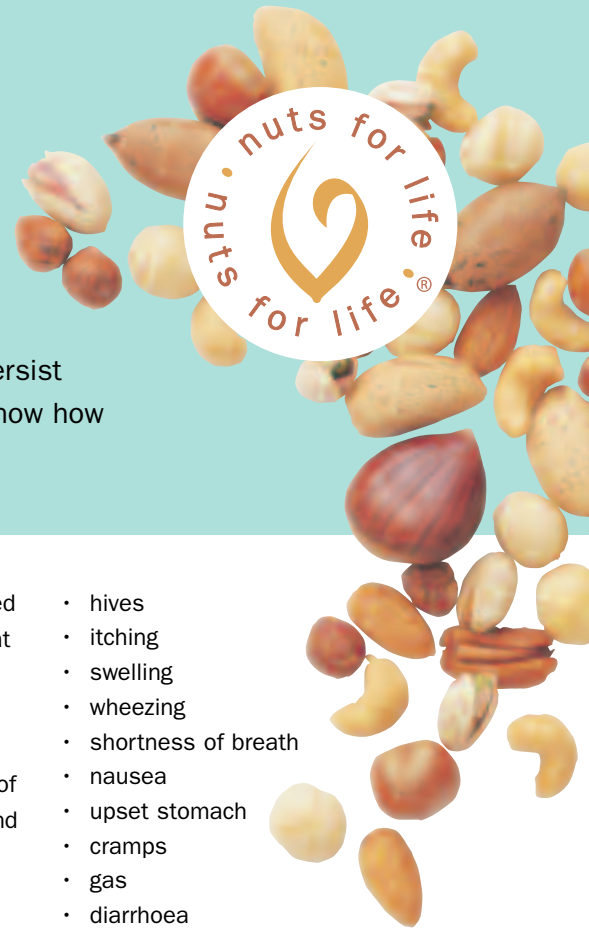


Nuts and allergy

Tree nuts such as **almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, chestnuts, hazelnuts, macadamias, pecans, pine nuts, pistachios and walnuts** are full of beneficial substances for good health. Despite this, *tree nut allergies*, are a common food allergy in infants and children, that can persist into adulthood. If you have an allergy to tree nuts, it is important you know how to manage it correctly.



What is a food allergy?

A food allergy occurs when the immune system reacts to an allergen (protein) in a food. If you have an allergy to tree nuts, your reaction is likely to occur soon after eating them and can rapidly progress. Food *allergy* is different to food *intolerance*. Food intolerance does not involve the immune system and reactions are often mild, occurring many hours after eating the food. It's important to distinguish food intolerance from a food allergy. If you have food intolerance, you can usually eat small amounts of problem foods without a reaction as you can "tolerate" small quantities. By contrast, if you have a true food allergy, even a tiny amount of the food may trigger a serious reaction.

How common are allergies?

There is currently no published Australian data available on how many people have

tree nut allergies but data from the United States and United Kingdom indicates that around 0.4 – 0.6% of the general population is allergic to at least one tree nut, that is 6 in every 1000 people. This compares to an estimated 0.6% – 0.7% of the population having a peanut allergy and a total of 1.1% being allergic to either peanuts and/or tree nuts.

How are tree nut allergies diagnosed?

A skin prick test or Radioallergosorbent test conducted by an Immunologist are the most reliable tools to diagnose tree nut allergies. If you suspect you have a tree nut allergy, ask your doctor for a referral to an Immunologist.

What is a nut allergic reaction?

In people with nut allergies, common reactions include:

- hives
- itching
- swelling
- wheezing
- shortness of breath
- nausea
- upset stomach
- cramps
- gas
- diarrhoea
- light-headedness/fainting
- sweating

Most allergic reactions are not life threatening. Although severe allergies can cause anaphylaxis and may be fatal. Reactions usually appear immediately, although sometimes they can be delayed for a few hours. Those with severe allergies should keep an anaphylactic kit handy at all times. The most common kit, called EpiPen® contains a preloaded syringe of epinephrine (adrenaline). Ensure everyone close to a severe allergy sufferer knows how to use this kit. Parents can teach their allergic children to manage their health conditions by encouraging them to ask questions, read labels, and carry and administer medications. Children and teens with allergies need to feel comfortable and secure in their ability to make their own decisions about food.

What is the best treatment for tree nut allergy?

If you have a known allergy to one type of nut, it is recommended that you avoid all nuts until carefully controlled and administered medical food challenge tests can determine if you are allergic to other nuts. You will require a definite diagnosis and a planned approach that avoids the allergic food. Consultation with an Immunologist and an Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) who specialises in food

Checklist for nut allergies

Diagnosing the problem

- Do you have eczema or asthma – you may be at higher risk of food allergies?
- Do you have a family member with a food allergy?
- Do you have suffer symptoms such as skin reactions, gut problems?
- Avoid those foods which may be responsible for symptoms
- Speak to your GP for referral to an Immunologist for skin prick tests to known allergens
- Undertake medically supervised food challenge tests to assess the extent of your allergy and cross-reactivity between foods.

To reduce the risk of allergic reactions

- Avoid those foods which you react to
- If eating out, clarify ingredients in dishes with the chef or host
- Make sure those close to you know of your condition
- Carry an EpiPen® kit with you if there is a risk of severe anaphylaxis and make sure your family and friends now how to use it too.

Nuts and allergy



allergy is recommended. Reading ingredient labels for all foods and cosmetics is also key. If unsure about the ingredients in a product, do not eat or use it until you have contacted the manufacturer.

How do I know if a product contains tree nuts?

In 2002 it became law to state the presence of commonly allergenic foods (including nuts) on food labels. Always read labels closely. If you have a nut allergy, avoid products that contain the terms listed below in the ingredients list. This list has been developed as a guide only. Other ingredients may contain, or have come into contact with, nuts. Always check with the manufacturer if you are unsure. In addition to this labelling, many food manufacturers choose to highlight the risk of accidental cross-contact between products that do contain allergens and products that do not contain allergens, sometimes using statements such as “Made on the same line as products that contain nuts” or “May contain traces of nuts”.

- almonds
- Amoretto
- artificial nuts
- bitter almond
- brazil nuts
- caponata
- candle
- cashews
- chestnuts
- Frangelico
- gingko
- gianduja
- hazelnuts/filbert
- hickory nuts
- loramine wax
- macadamia nuts
- mandelonas
- marzipan/almond paste
- mixed nuts
- nougat
- nut butters
- nutmeal
- nut paste
- nut pieces
- peanut/butter
- peanutamide
- palms
- pecans
- pesto
- nut flavourings (natural and artificial)
- pistachios
- pine nuts (pinyon nuts, pignolia nuts)
- pralines
- walnuts

How to get all the nutrition that nuts contain so you're not missing out?

If you do have nut allergies a balanced diet will give you the nutrients you need to maintain your health and wellbeing. By excluding nuts and products that contain nuts you may need to pay extra attention to the foods that make up your daily diet. If you believe you may be missing essential nutrients as a result of dietary restrictions you can consult your doctor or local Accredited Practising Dietitian.

Allergy References

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For further information on nuts and health refer to www.nutsforlife.com.au or phone **02 8295 2300**

Nuts for Life is an initiative of the Australian Tree Nut Industry

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