

Family Child Care Food Allergy Fact Sheets



Tree Nut Allergies

Tree nuts are one of the nine major allergens in the United States. Together, they cause about 90% of all food-related allergic reactions. This fact sheet will discuss how to manage tree nut allergies in a family child care.

How are children affected by tree nut allergies?

For both children and adults, tree nut allergies are one of the most common food allergies. About 0.4% – 0.5% of children in the United States have a tree nut allergy. The Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) found that tree nut allergies among children in the United States had risen by 18% from 2010 to 2017. Tree nut allergies are usually lifelong, but roughly 9% of children will outgrow them.

What nuts should be avoided when a child has a tree nut allergy?

Children with tree nut allergies may or may not be allergic to more than one type of tree nut, but State licensed healthcare professionals may recommend avoiding all tree nuts. A State licensed healthcare professional is defined as an individual authorized to write medical prescriptions under State law. This avoidance is because of the risk of cross-contact and multiple possible allergens. Cross-contact is the accidental transfer of allergens to an allergen-free food or surface. The Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) organization states the walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, cashews, and pistachios are the most common tree nut allergies for adults and children. Studies show that between 25% – 40% of individuals with tree nut allergies are also allergic to peanuts even though a peanut is a legume, not a nut.



The *Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA)* requires that the specific type of tree nut (such as almond and walnut) be included in the ingredient list on the food label. Always read the ingredient list for the word “tree nut” or any of the specific tree nuts listed in the following chart.

Tree Nuts			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almonds • Beechnuts • Brazil nuts • Butternuts • Candlenuts (kukui) • Cashews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chestnuts • Chinquapins (chinkapin) • Coconuts* • Ginkgos • Hazelnuts (cobnuts/filberts) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hickory nuts • Lychee (lichee/litchi nuts) • Macadamia (bush nuts) • Nangai nuts • Pecans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pili nuts • Pine nuts (Indian, piñon, pinyon, pigndi, piñolia, pignon, pignoli) • Pistachios • Shea nuts (karite) • Walnuts

*Coconut has not typically been restricted for people with tree nut allergies. However, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) began identifying coconut as a tree nut in 2006. There are some documented cases of coconut allergies, but most occurred in people without other tree nut allergies. Always get clarification from a State licensed healthcare professional about serving coconut to a child with a tree nut allergy.

What foods contain tree nuts?

There are many unexpected sources of tree nuts, so reading the ingredient list on food labels is important to prevent exposure to tree nuts. Tree nuts can be ingredients in prepared food products, but also can be found in household products, such as lotions and soaps. The following chart lists some food items that often contain tree nuts.

Tree Nut-Based Products	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artificial nuts and flavoring • Gianduja (a chocolate-hazelnut spread) • Mandelonas (peanuts soaked in almond flavoring) • Marzipan (an almond confection) • Natural nut extracts and flavorings (almond, black walnut, wintergreen) • Nougat (a roasted nut confection) • Nut butters (cashew, hazelnut, shea nut) • Nut distillates/alcoholic extracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nut meal/flour • Nut meat • Nut milk (almond milk, cashew milk) • Nut oils* (almond oil, walnut oil) • Nut paste (almond paste) • Nutella® • Praline (a boiled pecan confection) • Walnut/black walnut hull extract (flavoring)

*Tree nut oils are usually less refined oils and may contain traces of tree nut protein. They are not usually safe for individuals with tree nut allergies.

Dishes, Foods, and Products That May Contain Tree Nuts*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baked goods • Breading • Breakfast cereals • Candies, candy bars, chocolates • Cereals, breakfast bars, cereal bars • Crackers • Energy bars • Flavored coffees, creamers, and syrups (hazelnut) • Frozen desserts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gluten-free products • Granola bars • Heartnut • Honey • Marinades • Mortadella • Pancakes • Pasta • Pesto • Pie crust • Recipes that replace all-purpose flour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salads and salad dressings • Sauces (barbeque, chili sauce, hot sauce, mole sauce, spaghetti sauce) • Trail mix • Vegan cheeses • Vegan meats • Vegan spreads • Veggie burgers • Waffles
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There are also food items that are not made with tree nuts but may be produced in a facility where tree nuts are used (for example, cereal bars). As a result, cross-contact with tree nuts may occur. Do not give a food to a child with a tree nut allergy that is labeled with an advisory statement such as being produced or manufactured in a facility with tree nuts. Always read the ingredients, check for allergen information, and consider cross-contact before serving any food to a child with a food allergy.

The following are some food items that are often confused as tree nuts but are not:

- Nutmeg (is a seed)
- Poppy seeds
- Sesame seeds
- Sunflower seeds
- Water chestnut (is a root)

The previously mentioned foods are usually safe for a person with a tree nut allergy. They do not usually need to be avoided unless recommended by a State licensed healthcare professional or if the child has an additional allergy to seeds.

What substitutes can be used for tree nuts in meals?

The following chart lists common menu items that may be used as safe substitutions to items that contain tree nuts. Always carefully read ingredient lists, even for foods that do not usually contain tree nuts.

Menu Items and Condiments That May Contain Tree Nuts*	Possible Substitutes*†
Bread, bagels, biscuits, muffins, other bread products*	Bread products without tree nuts
Breakfast cereals	Breakfast cereals without tree nuts
Mixed dish containing tree nuts	Mixed dish without tree nuts
Tree nut butters (almond butter, cashew nut butter)	Peanut butter, sesame seed butter, soy nut butter, sunflower seed butter

*All meals and snacks claimed for reimbursement must meet the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern requirements. Please visit www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks for more information. For children with food allergies, providers are required to provide meal modifications as stated in the child's medical statement signed by a State licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian. Registered dietitians can also submit medical statements for meal modifications for children with disabilities. Registered dietitians are not required to have a State license. CACFP operations are required to implement this change by October 1, 2025. Meal modifications may require providing meals and snacks that do not meet CACFP meal pattern requirements. These meals are reimbursable as long as there is a medical statement on file documenting the necessary accommodations. Providers may choose to accommodate food-related disabilities without a signed medical statement if the meal modifications still meet the meal pattern requirements. Refer to the *Family Child Care Food Allergy Fact Sheets – Accommodating Children with Food Allergies* for more information.

†Always review the ingredient list to verify ingredients and check for possible cross-contact.

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For More Information

Food Allergy Research & Education
www.foodallergy.org

Institute of Child Nutrition
www.theicn.org/foodsafety

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Food Allergens
www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition/food-allergies

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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<https://www.fns.usda.gov/civil-rights/usda-nondiscrimination-statement-other-fns-programs>

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Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2024). *Family child care food allergy fact sheets – Tree nut allergies*. University, MS: Author.

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10/11/2024