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. This 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

- Almonds
- Beechnuts
- Brazil nuts
- Butternuts
- Candle nuts (kukui)
- Cashews
- Chestnuts
- Chinquapins (chinkapin)
- Coconuts*
- Ginkgos
- Hazelnuts (cobnuts/filberts)
- Hickory nuts
- Lychee (lichee/ litchi nuts)
- Macadamia (bush nuts)
- Nangai nuts
- Pecans
- Pili nuts
- Pine nuts (Indian, piñon, pinyon, pign'di, pign'oli, 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tree Nut-Based Products</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artificial nuts and flavoring</td>
<td>Nut meal/flour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gianduja (a chocolate-hazelnut spread)</td>
<td>Nut meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandelonas (peanuts soaked in almond flavoring)</td>
<td>Nut milk (almond milk, cashew milk)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marzipan (an almond confection)</td>
<td>Nut oils* (almond oil, walnut oil)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural nut extracts and flavorings (almond, black walnut, wintergreen)</td>
<td>Nut paste (almond paste)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nougat (a roasted nut confection)</td>
<td>Nutella®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nut butters (cashew, hazelnut, shea nut)</td>
<td>Praline (a boiled pecan confection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nut distillates/alcoholic extracts</td>
<td>Walnut/black walnut hull extract (flavoring)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baked goods</th>
<th>Gluten-free products</th>
<th>Salads and salad dressings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breading</td>
<td>Granola bars</td>
<td>Sauces (barbeque, chili sauce, hot sauce, mole sauce, spaghetti sauce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast cereals</td>
<td>Heartnut</td>
<td>Trail mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candies, candy bars, chocolates</td>
<td>Honey</td>
<td>Vegan cheeses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cereals, breakfast bars, cereal bars</td>
<td>Marinades</td>
<td>Vegan meats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crackers</td>
<td>Mortadella</td>
<td>Vegan spreads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy bars</td>
<td>Pancakes</td>
<td>Veggie burgers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flavored coffees, creamers, and syrups (hazelnut)</td>
<td>Pasta</td>
<td>Waffles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen desserts</td>
<td>Pesto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pie crust</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recipes that replace all-purpose flour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 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.

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

*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. 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.
References


Tree Nut Allergies

For More Information
Food Allergy Research & Education
www.foodallergy.org

Institute of Child Nutrition
www.theicn.org/foodsafety


https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition/food-allergies

https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/senate-bill/578?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22S+578%22%5D%7D&s=1&r=1

For the nondiscrimination statement in other languages:

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information contained in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

Suggested Reference Citation:

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds. The USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA employer.

© 2022, Institute of Child Nutrition, The University of Mississippi, School of Applied Sciences