

Should My Child Try Peanut Allergy Treatment?

Introduction

Even when you and your child are doing your best to avoid peanuts, accidental ingestion still can occur. If your child is between 4 and 17 years of age, a new treatment may help. Oral Peanut Immunotherapy (OIT) slowly exposes an allergic child to peanut protein so their immune system is less likely to react if they accidentally eat something containing a small amount of peanut. Even with this treatment, your child must continue to avoid peanuts in general and carry epinephrine injectors. So while your child will still be allergic to peanut, the treatment goal is to reduce the risk and fear of a future life threatening reaction from accidental peanut ingestion allowing them to be more comfortable in social situations.

- It will not enable your child to eat peanut anytime they wish
- It must be taken daily to maintain the effect even after the initial treatment phase ends
- Your child must always carry 2 epinephrine auto injectors and continue to read food labels
- Anaphylaxis could still occur

About Peanut Allergy

Peanut allergy is one of the most common food allergies, occurring in one in 50 children. Children with peanut allergies are taught to avoid peanut and carry epinephrine. That works well for many children although there is always a risk of accidental ingestion of peanut. A new treatment, Palforzia, may help children and their parents worry less by reducing the severity of allergic reactions caused by accidental ingestion of peanuts. The treatment has its risks and is not a cure.

About the New Treatment

Palforzia has been approved by the FDA as a treatment for peanut allergic children between the ages of 4-17 years old. It is known as oral immunotherapy and works by exposing the child to a small amount of peanut, so they become less likely to have an allergic reaction if they accidentally eat a peanut product. The treatment involves putting a tiny bit of peanut powder into food every day in an amount that is slowly increased over time. It is not a cure.

There are several limitations to the treatment. The child should take the treatment with a meal about the same time every day and should not exercise or have a hot bath or shower immediately prior to or within three hours after taking Palforzia.

Peanut Allergy Treatment

The child receives several increasing doses of Palforzia peanut powder over 3 hours during the first visit.

Then the child visits the allergist every two weeks starting the following day and continuing for at least the first 6 months. During these visits, the amount of peanut powder is increased followed by a 1-hour observation period. The child continues this higher dose of peanut powder daily at home until the next visit to the allergist.

Once the top dose (maintenance) is reached, the child takes the treatment once a day thereafter.

Possible side effects or risks

- Most common are stomach aches and itchy mouth or throat, which likely will decrease over time
- Hives and swelling, congestion and runny nose, wheezing, asthma symptoms developing or worsening, and anaphylaxis

- Increased risk of reaction if
 - Fasting
 - Menstruating
 - Sleep deprived
 - Using nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications (Advil, Aleve, Ibuprofen, etc.)
 - Asthma is not well controlled

Possible disadvantages

Many children and adolescents do not like the taste of peanut having avoided it all their life. This makes the therapy more challenging especially in younger children.

There is no endpoint so far, so it must be taken every day indefinitely or it stops working

What is the cost of treatment?

Variances in insurance coverage and the likely availability of financial assistance from the manufacturer make this difficult to answer directly.

What else should I know?

The treatment is not a cure and does not enable the child to knowingly eat peanuts or peanut products.

The treatment reduces the severity of allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis, that may occur with accidental exposure to peanut, not other food allergens.

The treatment must be refrigerated and taken with a meal.

Your Turn (bring your questions to your child's next appointment)

The next step is to talk about the treatment with us to help you figure out if the treatment might be an option for your child. Check the boxes if you AGREE with the following statements.

- My child and I frequently worry they will be exposed to peanuts and have a serious reaction
- My child avoids peanuts and carries an epinephrine autoinjector but still doesn't feel protected from a reaction
- I would be able to take my child to the allergist every two weeks for the first 6 months.
- My child is not able to fully enjoy participating in activities such as parties and overnight camp due to their peanut allergy
- It would not be difficult to plan daily activities such as showering and exercise around the treatment times
- My child would be able to adhere to a daily treatment
- Being able to afford the treatment is not a concern for me