

Study suggests women eating peanuts during breastfeeding could prevent child from developing allergy

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Credit: Daniele Pellati/public domain

(Medical Xpress)—A team of researchers with members from several institutions in Canada has conducted a study on women eating peanuts while breastfeeding and has found evidence that suggests doing so can reduce the chances of their child developing a peanut allergy as long as they also give peanuts directly to the child. In their paper published in the *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*, the group outlines their study, which assessed the habits of hundreds of mothers and their children over the course of several years, and explains what they found by doing so.

As most people are aware, there has been a growing rate of peanut and other allergies in many places around the world, particularly in North America and Europe. Recent research has suggested that it might be due to parents not introducing their [children](#) to foods that can cause problems while they are very young. One study actually found that children who consumed peanuts or food containing peanuts at an earlier

age had a slightly reduced likelihood of developing an allergy later. In this new effort, the researchers took another approach, studying whether [mothers](#) who ate peanuts while breastfeeding their babies might make a difference, as well. They enlisted the assistance of 343 Canadian children and their parents, asking mothers if they ate peanuts, or food that contained them during the time they were breastfeeding their babies. They also asked when they introduced their children directly to [peanut products](#) on a regular basis. They then followed the health of the children until they were 15 years old, noting which, if any, developed a peanut allergy.

The researchers report that children born to mothers who had eaten peanuts while breastfeeding and who had also been given peanut products directly during their first year of life had a [peanut](#) allergy rate of just 1.7 percent compared to the national overall average of 9.4 percent. They noted also that eating peanuts while breastfeeding but not giving the infant peanuts products directly did not help much, nor did not eating peanuts while breastfeeding but giving the children peanuts during their first year of life. They suggest that their results offer strong evidence that engaging in both activities reduces the chances of children developing a [peanut allergy](#).

More information: Tracy J. Pitt et al. Reduced risk of peanut sensitization following exposure through breast-feeding and early peanut introduction, *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* (2017). DOI: [10.1016/j.jaci.2017.06.024](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaci.2017.06.024)

Background

Recent trials have shown that avoiding peanuts during infancy increases the risk of peanut allergy; however, these studies did not address maternal peanut consumption.

Objective

We sought to investigate the relationship between maternal peanut consumption while breast-feeding, timing of direct peanut introduction, and peanut sensitization at age 7 years.

Methods

Secondary analysis of a nested cohort within the 1995 Canadian Asthma Primary Prevention Study intervention study was performed. Breast-feeding and maternal and infant peanut consumption were captured by repeated questionnaires during infancy. Skin prick testing for peanut sensitization was performed at age 7 years.

Results

Overall, 58.2% of mothers consumed peanuts while breast-feeding and 22.5% directly introduced peanuts to their infant by 12 months. At 7 years, 9.4% of children were sensitized to peanuts. The lowest incidence (1.7%) was observed among children whose mothers consumed peanuts while breast-feeding and directly introduced peanuts before 12 months. Incidence was significantly higher (P

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