

# 5 ways to safely introduce peanuts to your baby



In January 2017, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) released [a new set of guidelines](#) which may finally help prevent many children from getting peanut allergies in the future.

Below is a brief overview of the new recommendations.

## **When to introduce peanuts?**

If your child is at a high risk for developing peanut allergy, you may need to start earlier. Depending on your child's risk, he may belong to one of the three groups:

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**Group 1:** Children with severe eczema and/or egg allergy. They should be introduced to peanut containing foods between 4 and 6 months of age, as soon as they tried other solid foods. It is very important to discuss evaluation with the child's doctor prior to giving him peanut containing foods, to estimate the risk of an allergic reaction. In case the child's risk is high, he may need to be at a health professional's office at the time of introduction of peanuts. If the risk is low, you will be most likely instructed on how to safely introduce peanuts at home following a specific protocol [outlined in the guidelines](#).

**Group 2:** Children who have mild to minimal-to-moderate eczema and no egg allergy. They should be introduced to peanut containing products at around 6 months of age, as soon as they tried other solid foods. No evaluation for peanut allergy is required in this case and family does not need to follow any protocol when introducing peanuts.

**Group 3:** Children who have neither eczema nor egg allergy. They can be introduced to peanut containing products when solids are started, can be later than 6 months. There is not need to worry about doing it at a certain time or following a specific procedure.

## How much peanut products to give to your child

If your child has severe eczema and/or egg allergy but the allergy evaluation determined that he is at a low risk for peanut allergy, you will have to follow a certain protocol to introduce peanuts to your child at home.

If your child has no eczema, or mild to moderate eczema and no egg allergy, you do not have to follow any rules regarding the amounts or frequency and can introduce peanut containing foods in any amounts and offer them as often as you wish.

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## **Giving peanuts to your baby: safety first**

1. Never give your child whole peanuts or peanut butter from a spoon, they are choking hazards.
2. Make sure your child is healthy.
3. Choose a day when you are at home, not in a restaurant, daycare or traveling and watch your child for at least 2 hours after the feeding. It is also very important to familiarize yourself with the signs of an allergic reaction.

## **If your child is older than 6 months**

If your child is older than 6 months, he can still benefit from introduction of peanut containing food. The children who participated in the LEAP study were between 4 and 11 months at the time of peanut introduction and their risk of developing peanut allergy was still reduced.

So if you are strictly following Baby Led Weaning and your baby is not ready for finger foods by 6 months of age, he will still benefit from introduction of peanut containing foods whenever solids are started.

The same goes for children with developmental delays who may not be ready for solid foods by 6 months of age.

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For children without eczema or egg allergy and those with mild to moderate eczema you do not need to specific recipes or protocols to introduce peanuts safely. Here are a few suggestions you can use to safely incorporate peanuts in your child's food.

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- 1. Peanut snacks.** You can choose the same peanut containing snack Bamba that the researchers used in the LEAP study or a similar product containing protein powder. It can be offered as a finger food or softened with milk or water and fed with a spoon.
- 2. Peanut butter, thinned with hot water, formula or breast milk.** You can add it to purees, yogurt, mixed dishes or just feed your baby as is.
- 3. Ground peanuts.** Grind some fresh peanuts into powder and add to purees, yogurt or mixed dishes.
- 4. Finger foods, sprinkled with peanut powder.** Roll your baby's finger foods in peanut powder. This makes them less slippery, boosts nutrition and adds variety.
- 5. Peanut butter toast.** Spread a very thin layer of peanut butter on a toast to serve as a finger food.

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**Natalia Stasenko, Registered Dietitian and Child Nutritionist**  
*Founder of Feeding Bytes*

When her first child was small, Natalia made her share of feeding mistakes and battled a case of extreme picky eating that triggered her interest in pediatric nutrition.

In order to get to the bottom of the art and science of feeding kids, she trained as a Registered Dietitian at Columbia University, Teachers College in New York.

After a few years of running a successful nutrition private practice in NYC and consulting for various companies and agencies including Head Start, Natalia launched **Feeding Bytes** – an online program for parents where they can get the best professional advice on feeding their children from the comfort of their home.

As a national pediatric nutrition expert, Natalia has contributed to numerous media outlets including Parents Magazine, Pregnancy and Newborn Magazine, Kiwi magazine and Huffington post. She blogs monthly on **Scoop on Food blog** at parents.com.

Recently, she cowrote a cookbook **Real Baby Food** – an up to date resource on feeding children from 6 months to 3 years.

To get support in feeding your child and the whole family, read **Natalia's blog** or join her **Facebook community**.