

SAFETY

How to Introduce Allergens to Baby: Safe and Early Introduction Guide

Early allergen introduction reduces allergy risk. Get our step-by-step guide for introducing the Top 9 allergens (peanuts, eggs, milk, and more) safely from 4-6 months.

Key Takeaways

- The nine common allergens are peanut, tree nuts, egg, cow's milk, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish, and sesame.
- Introduce allergens early - around 6 months when your baby is ready - rather than delaying; delay does not prevent allergy and may increase risk.
- Offer one new allergen at a time, earlier in the day, in age-appropriate textures, and wait a few days before the next.
- Know the signs: mild reactions (hives, swelling, rash) versus anaphylaxis (trouble breathing, throat swelling) which needs emergency care.
- If your baby has moderate-to-severe eczema, an existing food allergy, or strong family history, talk to your pediatrician first.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the 9 common food allergens?

Peanut, tree nuts, egg, cow's milk, soy, wheat, fish, shellfish (crustacean), and sesame. These account for the large majority of food-allergic reactions in children.

When should I introduce allergens to my baby?

Once your baby is showing signs of readiness for solids, around 6 months, introduce common allergens early rather than delaying. Evidence suggests early introduction may reduce the risk of developing some food allergies. Confirm timing with your pediatrician.

Should I introduce one allergen at a time?

Yes. Introduce a single new allergen at a time, ideally earlier in the day, and wait a few days before adding the next, so you can spot and attribute any reaction.

What does an allergic reaction look like?

Mild reactions may include hives, redness or swelling around the mouth, mild vomiting, or an itchy rash. Severe reactions (anaphylaxis) involve trouble breathing, swelling of the tongue or throat, persistent vomiting, floppiness, or pale or blue skin and need emergency care.

Do I need to talk to my pediatrician first?

If your baby has moderate to severe eczema, an existing food allergy, or a strong family history of allergies, talk to your pediatrician before introducing allergens, they may advise testing or supervised introduction first.

How should I serve peanut and other allergens to a baby?

Never whole nuts or thick nut butter. Thin smooth peanut butter with water, breast milk, formula, or yogurt, or mix a little peanut flour into a familiar puree. Serve egg well-cooked and mashed, and fish flaked finely with all bones removed.

Sources

1. When to Introduce Allergenic Foods to Your Baby — American Academy of Pediatrics
2. Guidelines for Early Food Introduction and Patterns of Food Allergy — American Academy of Pediatrics
3. Infant and young child feeding — World Health Organization