



## **PEANUT ALLERGY**

While peanuts are a healthy, nutritious food for the majority of the population, for a small percentage of people (approximately .6 percent of the US population), peanuts can cause allergic reactions.

A food allergy is a reaction to an otherwise harmless food or food component that involves the body's immune system. A reaction occurs when the immune system responds abnormally to the protein or proteins in that particular food. The body reacts by flooding the system with histamines and other chemicals to fight off what is perceived as an invader to the body. Reactions can include upper respiratory problems, hives or eczema, upset stomach, asthma attack, or, in rare cases, anaphylactic shock that can result in death if not treated promptly. Foods most commonly associated with allergies are peanuts, tree nuts, fish, crustaceans, milk, eggs, soy and wheat.

Although anyone can develop a food allergy, the tendency toward allergic reactions is largely inherited. Where there is an immediate family history of atopic disorders (such as asthma or eczema) or other allergies, children may have two to four times the likelihood of developing a food allergy as children from families without allergic parents.

The US peanut industry supports and implements programs to manage food allergies associated with peanuts. For example, the US peanut industry:

- Adheres to Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act product labeling so consumers can make informed choices about the products they eat.
- Advocates Good Manufacturing Practices, Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points initiatives and comprehensive employee training and education designed to prevent cross contact during the manufacturing process.
- Aggressively supports and funds efforts to develop a peanut allergy vaccine and ways to mitigate allergic reactions in sensitive individuals. The industry also supports research to identify individuals likely to have severe reactions to peanuts and research to identify factors that contribute to the development of peanut allergies.
- Works collaboratively with the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network and other allergy organizations in both the U.S. and abroad to support their efforts on education and outreach to food allergic individuals.
- Advocates the carrying of self-injectable epinephrine (such as Epi-Pen and other brands) for food allergic individuals and supports educational efforts to encourage the availability of portable epinephrine for medical emergency units, schools, airplanes, and other public facilities.

Approved 6/20/10. For further information, please contact the American Peanut Council office in Alexandria, Va. at: Tel: 703-838-9500; email: [info@peanutsusa.com](mailto:info@peanutsusa.com).