

Study: Early peanut introduction doesn't harm nutrition, breastfeeding

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Infants who are fed peanut products to prevent allergies to such foods do not experience shortened breastfeeding or harm to their growth, according to a new analysis.

The findings are a follow-up to last year's Learning Early About Peanut Allergy (LEAP) study.

"The striking finding that early inclusion of peanut products in the diet reduces later development of allergy already is beginning to transform how clinicians approach peanut allergy prevention," National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Director Anthony S. Fauci, M.D., said in a news release. "The new results provide reassurance that early-life peanut consumption has no negative effect on children's growth and nutrition."



The LEAP study led by King's College London and funded by the NIAID randomly assigned 4- to 11-month-olds with severe eczema and/or egg allergy to avoid peanut or to eat it three times a week until 5 years of age. Last year, the team found 3% of those who ate peanut developed a peanut allergy compared to 17% of those who avoided such foods.

Scott H. Sicherer, M.D., FAAP, past chair of the AAP Section on Allergy and Immunology Executive Committee, said the initial findings left several unanswered questions regarding whether feeding peanut would impact breastfeeding or the child's growth and nutrition.

In the new analysis "[Impact of peanut consumption in the LEAP Study: Feasibility, Growth, and Nutrition](#)" researchers found no reduction in the length of time children breastfed despite consuming peanut products. Energy intakes were the same level for peanut eaters and avoiders although the diet of peanut eaters was higher in fat while that of peanut avoiders was higher in carbohydrates. There were no differences in height, weight or body mass index between the two groups.

"It's comforting to see that in this follow-up report those issues were not of concern," Dr. Sicherer said.

Another recent [follow-up analysis](#) found there was not a significant increase in peanut allergy among children who consumed peanut during the initial study but then stopped for a year.

Last year, the Academy was one of 10 medical organizations that endorsed [*Consensus Communication on Early Peanut Introduction and the Prevention of Peanut Allergy in High-Risk Infants*](#). Citing the LEAP study, the interim guidance says high-risk infants age 4 to 6 months may benefit from evaluation for a possible peanut allergy. If they are not allergic, a clinician may introduce them to peanut products that do not pose a risk of choking.

Dr. Sicherer, co-author of the consensus statement, is among the experts working on formal recommendations expected to be released later this year.

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