

Early peanut consumption may prevent allergy

New research contradicts guidelines that recommend that new mothers and infants avoid peanuts.

The new study, published in *The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* shows that children who avoided peanuts early in life were ten times more likely to develop allergy to peanuts than those children who were exposed.

Researchers looked at the incidence of peanut allergy among children in Britain and Israel. They compared this with data on peanut consumption collected from mothers of infants aged from four to 24 months.

The prevalence of peanut allergy in Britain was far higher than that in Israel - 1.8% compared with 0.17%. The most obvious difference in the diet of the two groups of children was early consumption of a diet that included peanuts. This suggests that early exposure is beneficial rather than harmful, contradicting government guidelines in countries such as Britain and Australia, that new mothers and infants avoid peanut consumption.

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