

Allergy Information:

Arachis oil (peanut oil) in vitamins and other medications

What is Arachis oil?

Arachis oil is another name for peanut oil. It can also be called groundnut oil which is used in cooking. In its refined (purified) form it is used in a range of medicines including children's vitamin drops e.g; Abidec®.

Refined oil should not contain any detectable amount of peanut protein which is the part of the peanut that people can have allergic reactions to.

Could taking a medicine containing arachis oil make a child develop an allergy to peanuts?

We would not expect refined peanut oils to cause allergy as all the peanut protein has been removed leaving only the oil. Introducing peanut into a baby's diet as early as possible has been shown to be protective against developing peanut allergy. Studies looking at children given vitamin drops containing arachis oil for a year did not show any increase in peanut allergy compared to those given vitamin drops without the oil (and if anything those with the peanut oil had less peanut allergy). These products can therefore be safely used even if there is a family history of peanut allergy.

The only area which is not clear is the use of unrefined peanut oils in creams and ointments which are put onto the skin regularly. Some research in the past suggested this may carry an increased risk of developing peanut allergy. Most products now only used highly refined oils which are unlikely to cause any problem but as a cautionary measure families with a history of allergy may prefer to avoid using skin products containing arachis oil.

Why are some medical products containing arachis oil labelled as unsuitable for those with peanut or soya allergy?

Refined arachis oil (the type used in medicines) has been given in trials to those with peanut allergy without problems. There are no recorded cases of severe allergic reactions to medicines containing arachis oil taken by mouth. There is however a theoretical risk that there may be remaining traces of peanut protein which could cause a reaction.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) in the UK states that medical products containing arachis oil, even in its refined form, should be labelled as 'if you

are allergic to peanut or soya, do not use this medicinal product'. Soya is mentioned as a small proportion of people with soya allergy will also be peanut allergic.

If you have an allergy to soya or peanuts you should discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist who can advise if an alternative product without these ingredients may be an option. Where there are no suitable alternatives it will generally be the case that the benefits of treatment will outweigh any potential risks of allergic reactions (which are very low).

Unrefined peanut oil could potentially cause reactions in those with peanut allergy but it is not used in medicines. It could possibly be found in some ointments and creams not sold as medical products. For those with peanut allergy we would advise avoiding non-medical grade skin creams and ointments containing peanut/arachis oil as it may cause skin irritation.

If you realise that you are taking a medicine containing arachis / peanut oil and have not had any problems then you should continue to do so and make your doctor or pharmacist aware at the next convenient opportunity. If there are any suspicions that it has been causing symptoms then this should be discussed with your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible.

Further information

Anaphylaxis UK: Peanut Oil: The facts information leaflet;
<https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/fact-sheet/peanut-oil-allergy/>

NHS Specialist Pharmacy Service <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/arachis-oil-in-medicineswhat-are-the-risks-of-developing-peanut-allergy/>

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital.

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