

FOOD ALLERGY CENTER OF PEORIA

Stephen J. Smart, MD – Penelope A. Ewbank, MD

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Peanut Allergy Treatment: Is it Right for my Child?

It can be frightening if your child has a peanut allergy, one of the most common food allergies (1 out of 50 children). Even when you are doing your best to avoid peanuts, accidental ingestions can still occur since peanut protein can be found in many different food products. Data shows that anaphylaxis occurs in 7% of peanut-allergic children *per year*. If your child is 4-17 years old, a new treatment may help reduce the severity of reactions, including anaphylaxis, that may happen with accidental exposure.

Oral peanut immunotherapy slowly exposes an allergic child to peanut protein so their immune system becomes less likely to react if they accidentally eat something with a small amount of peanut.

This new, FDA-approved treatment, Palforzia™ may help children and their parents worry less by reducing the severity of allergic reactions caused by accidental ingestion of peanuts. However, the treatment – because it is essentially pharmaceutical grade peanut protein – has its risks, and side effects, and is not a cure. Whether or not they are taking the treatment, if a child with peanut allergy has a significant reaction, they should inject their epinephrine to treat the reaction and call 911. But for many parents, the potential benefit of easing their worry about accidental ingestion outweighs the negatives and limitations of therapy. It may provide more comfort in social situations such as school lunchtime, parties, overnights, playdates and eating in restaurants.

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Limitations:

- Child should take treatment at roughly the same time daily and with food
- Avoid exercise and hot bath/shower for 2-3 hours after dose
- Requires regular visits to allergist
- Common GI side effects: stomachache, nausea, itchy mouth/throat
- Risk of allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis, mostly while building up dose
- Asthma must be well-controlled and cannot have EoE (eosinophilic esophagitis)
- Improves, but doesn't cure allergy; still need to avoid and carry Epipen or AuviQ

Process:

On Day #1, the child receives several increasing doses (called initial dose escalation), spaced over 4-5 hours at the office. This is followed by daily dosing at home for 2 weeks. The child returns every 2 weeks for the next single dose increase under observation. This process continues every 2 weeks until the maintenance dose is reached (peanut protein that approximates 1-2 peanuts per day).

Is it Right for my Child?

- My child and I frequently worry they will be exposed to peanuts and have a serious reaction
- My child avoids peanuts and carries an Epipen but still doesn't feel protected from a reaction
- I would be able to take my child to the allergist every 2 weeks for several months
- My child is not able to fully enjoy participating in activities such as parties and overnights due to peanut allergy

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- My child would be willing to try this treatment and family is on-board
- My child would be able to adhere to a daily treatment

Call Allergy & Asthma of Illinois to schedule an appointment.