Peanut Allergy May Be Linked To Skin Creams Containing Peanut Oil And To Soy Milk

10/03/2003

Interim research findings from the Children of the 90s study have identified possible risk factors for the development of peanut allergy in children.

The research was commissioned by the UK Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) and now taken over by the UK Food Standards Agency (FSA).

The researchers identified children with peanut allergy amongst 14,000 children in the south west of the UK.

The Children of the 90s study (known scientifically as ALSPAC), based at Bristol University, has followed these children from before birth and is looking at all aspects of their health and development. They have been monitored since their mothers were in early pregnancy.

The research findings are as follows:

- Peanut allergy is associated with eczema and rashes in early infancy. The chances of developing peanut allergy are increased if the rash is more severe, with oozing and crusting.
- The application of preparations containing peanut oil to the skin of infants with rashes was associated with an increased risk of developing peanut allergy.
- Additionally, the researchers found that significantly more infants who developed peanut allergy were exposed to soy formula feeds in infancy. This association was not explained by the fact that children with eczema and allergies tend to be given soy milk as compared to other children.
- Significantly, the authors found no evidence of peanut allergy at birth, suggesting that peanut allergy occurs after birth.
- In this study the authors could not find a link between maternal consumption of peanuts during pregnancy or while breastfeeding and the development of peanut allergy. Nearly all the children reacted to peanut upon their first known exposure.
Dr Gideon Lack, the lead researcher, said: "These results suggest that sensitisation to peanut may occur through exposure to minute amounts of peanut through the skin and may possibly also occur as a result of soya exposure." Confirmation of these findings is required in future studies.

The researchers urge all parents who have children on soy formulas, and creams or preparations that include peanut (arachis) oil not to change these without prior medical consultation.

The research was carried out by Dr. Gideon Lack at Imperial College London at St. Mary’s Hospital, London, and Professor Jean Golding and Kate Northstone at the University of Bristol.

Facts and figures:

- 49 of the 14,000 children studied had a clear history of peanut allergy; 23 of these were confirmed on the basis of a peanut challenge at the age of 5 years.
- More than twice as many children with peanut allergy (57%) had eczema-like rashes in the first 6 months of life compared to 23% in the whole population.
- The great majority of children (84%) with peanut allergy had been exposed to creams containing peanut oil in the first 6 months of life, compared to 53% of children with eczema who did not develop peanut allergy.
- 24% of the peanut allergic children had consumed soy milk/formula in the first 2 years of life compared with 8% in the whole population.

Notes:


Please acknowledge Children of the 90s in any reporting as well as Imperial College London at St Mary’s Hospital, London.

This project is now funded by the Food Standards Agency as part of its programme of research on food intolerance and food allergy. Final results are expected from this work later this summer. When completed, the researchers will send a full report of the study to the Agency.

These interim findings have been discussed with the Department of Health and the Medicines Control Agency, who have responsibility for advice on infant feeding practices and pharmaceutical products, respectively.

ALSPAC The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (also...
known as Children of the 90s) is a unique ongoing research project based in the University of Bristol. It enrolled 14,000 mothers during pregnancy in 1991-2 and has followed most of the children and parents in minute detail ever since.

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