

Prognosis

Allergies to sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, and other seeds tend to persist and are less likely to be outgrown than other food allergies. However, RAST testing can be used to follow the progression of your child's seed allergy. If IgE levels drop, it is possible that a food challenge in a controlled medical setting may be done to determine whether your child has outgrown the food allergy.



FOOD ALLERGY PROGRAM

The Food Allergy Program at Children's National Medical Center provides comprehensive services in the evaluation and management of a wide variety of food allergies, including IgE-mediated food allergy, gastrointestinal food allergy, and eosinophilic gastrointestinal disorders.

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RESOURCES

For more detailed information about food allergies, visit:

- The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (www.foodallergy.org)
- The Food Allergy Initiative (www.faiusa.org)

www.childrensnational.org

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ALL about **SEED** **ALLERGIES**



Overview of Seed Allergy

There are a number of different seeds that can be responsible for a seed allergy, including sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, poppy seeds, and pumpkin seeds. Over the past 10-20 years, there has been an increase in the number of people with sesame allergy in the United States. This may be because the population is more exposed to sesame seeds now than in the past. In fact, in Israel, where sesame is a dietary staple, there is a very high prevalence of sesame seed allergy. Sesame seeds can cause severe reactions and anaphylaxis. Also, sesame seeds show up in a variety of different foods and there is a high risk for cross-contamination of other foods with sesame. In the US, allergies to other seeds such as sunflower seeds, poppy seeds, rapeseed, flaxseed, and pumpkin seeds are less common.



Management of a Seed Allergy

How to prevent the possibility of a reaction

The only way to prevent the possibility of an allergic reaction is to strictly avoid seeds. Typically, your child may only have to avoid the seed he or she is allergic to, but please discuss this with your allergist. Avoiding seeds means not eating seeds, not eating foods containing seeds, and not eating foods that might be cross-contaminated with seeds.

Read the labels of all foods your child eats. Manufacturers are not required to clearly identify sesame seeds or any other kind of seed on their ingredient labels. This means that parents of a child with seed allergy must be extra cautious. It is important to carefully read the labels on all foods before you buy them or give them to your child to eat. If the label is not clear, and you are not sure whether or not the product contains seeds, call the manufacturer and ask. Always check the label on a food, even if the food has been safe for your child in the past because ingredients tend to change unexpectedly. Also, be careful when eating out. If you are unsure about a dish, do not let your child eat it.



How to avoid seeds

The following is a list of ingredients that indicate the presence of sesame, which is the seed responsible for most seed allergies. If your child is sesame-allergic, it is important that he or she avoid these ingredients and any foods containing the following ingredients.

Benne
Gomasio (sesame salt)
Halvah
Hummus
Tahini
Sesame oil
Sesamol/sesamolina
Sesamum indicum
Sim sim
Vegetable oil (may contain sesame oil)

Sources of Seeds:

- Baked goods often contain sesame or other types of seeds. Sesame seeds are found on buns, breads, crackers, and bagels.
- Muesli is a type of cereal that contains seeds.
- Snack foods may contain seeds. Make sure to check the ingredients labels on pretzels, bagel chips, pita chips, trail mix, and granola bars.
- Sauces, dips, soups, and salad dressings may contain seeds.
- Seeds are often found in processed meats and vegetarian burgers.
- Seeds can also be found in margarine.
- It is better for people with seed allergies to avoid Middle Eastern and Asian restaurants. These cuisines often include seeds, particularly sesame seeds in their dishes. Even if your child orders a seed-free meal, there is still a very high chance of cross-contamination if eating in one of these restaurants.