

Position Statement - Packaged Foods for Infants that Contain Most of the Common Food Allergens

Packaged foods for infants that contain most of the common food allergens are commercially available for online purchase. These products are designed to be added to infant food, or as snacks, to aid with the inclusion of common food allergens in the infant's diet.

Key Points:

1. To be consistent with ASCIA Guidelines, packaged foods for infants that contain most of the common food allergens should NOT be used for introduction of common food allergens.
2. If parents in Australia and New Zealand choose to use these products, they should ONLY be used as a convenience product once all of the most common food allergens have already been introduced.
3. ASCIA recommends feeding infants a variety of solid foods, as part of family meals to provide a nutritional and diverse diet. Using these products may be unnecessary and costly if common food allergens are regularly included in family meals.

ASCIA Guidelines for Infant feeding and Allergy Prevention state:

- **When your infant is ready, at around six months, but not before four months, start to introduce a variety of solid foods, starting with iron rich foods, while continuing breastfeeding.** All infants should be given allergenic solid foods including peanut butter, cooked egg, dairy and wheat products in the first year of life. There is published evidence that this can protect against food allergy developing.
- **Only introduce one new common food allergen at each meal, so that the problem food can be identified if there is an allergic reaction.** The most common food allergens are cow's milk (dairy), egg, peanut, tree nuts, wheat, soy, sesame, fish and shellfish (crustaceans).
- **Unless there is an allergic reaction to the common food allergen, continue to give the food to your baby regularly (at least twice weekly), as part of a varied diet.** Trying a food and then not giving it regularly to your infant may result in a food allergy developing.

ASCIA has the following concerns about infant feeding products containing multiple food allergens:

- These products are promoted as a way to introduce multiple common food allergens at the same time, on some international websites and webinars. This is inconsistent with ASCIA Guidelines and the Australian government funded food allergy prevention program Nip Allergies in the Bub.
- If these products are used for the first introduction of food allergens, this may increase the risk of some infants developing food allergy. For example, if an infant has an allergic reaction to a product containing multiple common food allergens, they will need to avoid all of the common food allergens in the product that they do not already eat regularly in other forms, whilst waiting for assessment by a paediatric clinical immunology/allergy specialist. As wait lists for these specialists in Australia and New Zealand can be long, this will delay the introduction of multiple foods or cause breaks in exposure to common food allergens, which may increase the risk of developing food allergy.
- These products are regulated by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). However, research is needed to confirm if they contain sufficient amounts of each common food allergen to create tolerance and prevent food allergy, or to maintain tolerance once introduced. Randomised controlled trials for infant feeding and allergy prevention worldwide have used larger amounts of the food allergens.

Further information: www.allergy.org.au/hp/papers/infant-feeding-allergy-prevention

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