



For Immediate Release

Contact: Monica Baer
414-881-5053

monica@theweaponry.com

Miriam Crosby
229-888-0216

mcrosby@peanut-institute.com

Updated Dietary Guidelines Recommend Including Nuts/Peanuts in Childhood Diets

Peanut Foods Can Help Fuel Development and Growth of Brain and Body

Albany, Ga. (May 11, 2021) – For the first time, the most recent *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* include recommendations for infants and toddlers, a timeframe referred to as “B24” that covers birth to 24 months. During the critical B24 period, the 2020-2025 guidelines address the beneficial role nuts/peanuts can play in the development and growth of a child’s brain and body.

Specifically, the guidelines highlight that nuts/peanuts “are important sources of iron, zinc, protein, choline, and long chain polyunsaturated fatty acids [1]” – all of which support a child’s overall development and health. Polyunsaturated fatty acids, often referred to as ‘healthy fats,’ are vital for the rapid brain development that occurs during a child’s first two years. [1]

“The dietary guidelines are based on the latest nutrition research and science so they are at the forefront of what Americans of all ages should be eating for optimal health,” says Dr. Samara Sterling, a nutrition scientist and research director for [The Peanut Institute](https://www.peanutinstitute.com). “In terms of childhood nutrition, peanuts and peanut butter are an affordable way to deliver nutrient-rich foods during B24.”

In addition to fatty acids, a child’s brain development requires choline and copper, which are found in peanuts. Choline is an essential nutrient that promotes concentration and helps build neurotransmitters in the brain. Copper also promotes concentration, and like polyunsaturated fatty acids, helps the body produce neurons.

In terms of bodily growth, peanuts contain arginine, an important amino acid. During B24, children can gain an average of four to six lbs. and two to three inches per year. [2] For infants

and toddlers, arginine intake from foods is associated with higher growth velocity and linear growth. [3] In fact, peanuts have more arginine than just about any other food.

“For both children and adults, peanuts and peanut butter are considered superfoods, which means they’re nutrient dense. For example, just a small serving of peanuts or peanut butter delivers 19 vitamins and minerals, many of which are critical to a child’s development,” says Sterling.

When and How to Introduce Peanut Foods

The *American Academy of Pediatrics* recommends that parents introduce complementary foods (foods other than breast milk or infant formula) into their baby’s diet at around six months old, which is a great time to incorporate peanut products. [4]

Infants should not be fed whole peanuts or sticky foods due to the choking risk. However, parents can thin a very small amount of peanut butter with water and mix it into baby rice cereal. As children get older, thinned peanut butter can be paired with softened vegetables.

A study published in the *Journal of American Dietetics Association* found that “pairing vegetables with a preferred taste like peanut butter significantly increased vegetable consumption in children.” [5].

And, once a toddler is eating bread, crackers and other grains, a light smear of peanut butter can be applied. At age four, small amounts of ground peanuts or whole peanuts can be incorporated into healthy snacks and meals.

Childhood Nutrition and Peanut Allergies

In terms of peanut allergies, there’s a variety of research that supports early introduction.

According to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025*, early introduction of peanuts as a complementary food can reduce the risk of peanut allergies. [1]

In addition, the LEAP study (Learning Early About Peanut Allergy) showed that children exposed to peanut foods between four to 11 months of age had an 86% reduced risk of a peanut allergy at the end of five years. [6]

Establishing Healthy Eating Habits

Studies show that a baby’s diet, from breastfeeding to solid foods, can influence how they eat as they get older. And, as a result, affect their health. [7] That’s why it’s important to introduce healthy foods to children early on.

In adults, regular consumption of peanuts and peanut butter is associated with better weight management, heart health and protection from diabetes [8-11], and early introduction of peanuts could reduce the risk of some of these chronic diseases as infants and toddlers grow older.

For example, a 2019 study showed that children as young as six who ate nuts/peanuts instead of sweet snacks had a 59% lower risk of early signs of atherosclerosis than children who didn't. [12]

“The eating habits that are established during our childhood have a significant impact on our health for years to come,” says Sterling. “The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* provide an excellent nutrition roadmap for everyone from infants to seniors.”

For more information on B24 nutrition, watch The Peanut Institute's new "[Science Made Simple](#)" video. The video and health recipes are available at peanuteinstitute.com.

###

Based in Albany, Ga., [The Peanut Institute](#) is a non-profit organization supporting nutrition research and developing educational programs to encourage healthful lifestyles that include peanuts and peanut products. The Peanut Institute pursues its mission through research programs, educational initiatives and the promotion of healthful lifestyles to consumers of all ages. As an independent forum, The Peanut Institute is uniquely positioned to work with all segments of the food industry, the research community, academia, consumer organizations and governmental institutions.

1. USDA. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 2020; Available from: https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf.
2. The growing child: 2-year-olds. (n.d.). Retrieved April 13, 2021, from <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/the-growing-child-2yearolds>
3. van Vught, A.J.A.H., et al., Dietary arginine and linear growth: the Copenhagen School Child Intervention Study. *British Journal of Nutrition*, 2013. 109(6): p. 1031-1039.2. Kennedy D. O. (2016). *Pediatrics*, A.A.o. Infant Food and Feeding. 2021; Available from: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/HALF-Implementation-Guide/Age-Specific-Content/Pages/Infant-Food-and-Feeding.aspx>.
5. Johnston, C.A., et al., Increasing vegetable intake in Mexican-American youth: a randomized controlled trial. *J Am Diet Assoc*, 2011. 111(5): p. 716-20.
6. Toit, G.D., et al., *Randomized Trial of Peanut Consumption in Infants at Risk for Peanut Allergy*. *The New England journal of medicine*, 2015. 372(9): p. 803-813.
7. Alvarez-Pitti, J., A. de Blas, and E. Lurbe, Innovations in Infant Feeding: Future Challenges and Opportunities in Obesity and Cardiometabolic Disease. *Nutrients*, 2020. 12(11).

8. Johnston, C.A., et al., Weight loss in overweight Mexican American children: a randomized, controlled trial. *Pediatrics*, 2007. 120(6): p. e1450-7.
9. Lilly, L.N., et al., The Effect of Added Peanut Butter on the Glycemic Response to a High-Glycemic Index Meal: A Pilot Study. *J Am Coll Nutr*, 2018: p. 1-7.
10. Luu, H.N., et al., Prospective evaluation of the association of nut/peanut consumption with total and cause-specific mortality. *JAMA Intern Med*, 2015. 175(5): p. 755-66.
11. Liu, X., et al., Changes in nut consumption influence long-term weight change in US men and women. *BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health*, 2019: p. bmjnph-2019-000034.
12. Aghayan, M., et al., Association of nuts and unhealthy snacks with subclinical atherosclerosis among children and adolescents with overweight and obesity. *Nutrition & Metabolism*, 2019. 16(1): p. 23.