

### How should you manage a reaction?

Children and parents will be given a written management plan in clinic and prescribed appropriate medication which should be always available.

If sesame seeds are accidentally eaten, the food should be spat out straight away and an antihistamine taken as soon as possible.

Severe symptoms:

- Difficulty breathing (wheezing, noisy breathing, blue colour)
- Swelling in the throat (noisy breathing, drooling)
- Feeling faint or dizzy, looking very pale (lie the child down with their legs raised).

**If any of these severe symptoms occur get help straight away and dial 999 stating “anaphylaxis” (ana-fil-ak-sis).**

### Who needs to know about this allergy?

It is important to inform the nursery/school and any after school clubs. Any other carers such as grandparents, relatives and school friends' parents will also need to know.

### Is sesame seed allergy life long?

Most children with sesame seed allergy (over 80%) will not outgrow their allergy. If there has been no reaction for a long time an oral food challenge may be suggested by your doctor.

### Is there a cure?

There is no cure for sesame seed allergy, but research is underway which may lead to the development of new treatments.

### How can I contact you if I need to?

#### References

Lemoine-Courcelles C *et al.* Sesame allergy a time burden for families of children *J Allergy Clin Immunol Pract*, 2021  
Saf S *et al.* Diagnosis of sesame allergy: . . . *J Allergy Clin Immunol Pract*, 2020.



North West Paediatric Allergy Network

# Sesame seed allergy

## Information Leaflet

[www.allergynorthwest.nhs.uk](http://www.allergynorthwest.nhs.uk)

Created October 2012, Reviewed Jan 2021, Next review date Jan 2024.

*Sesame seed allergy Guidelines - North West Paediatric Allergy Implementation Group*  
*This information should be used in conjunction with advice from a medical professional.*

### **What is sesame seed allergy?**

An allergy to sesame protein after eating the seed. It has become more common over the past ten years and is estimated to affect 1 in 100 people. One in three children with multiple food allergies may have sesame allergies.

### **What are the symptoms of sesame seed allergy?**

Symptoms usually occur straight after eating food containing sesame seed but can occur up to one hour later. The reaction tends to be mild and may include a rash (hives or “nettle” rash) or swelling, especially around the face. Some children have an itchy throat; others may vomit or have diarrhoea. Severe reactions (anaphylaxis) are less common and include difficulty breathing (with wheeze or swelling in the throat), feeling faint or dizzy. People can also develop delayed skin reactions to using creams and toiletries containing sesame seed oil.

### **How serious is sesame seed allergy?**

Most people with sesame seed allergy will only have mild reactions. Severe reactions affecting the child’s breathing occur, particularly in those with poorly controlled asthma. More severe reactions may also occur if the child has a cold, following intense exercise, at times of stress or in teenagers after drinking alcohol. Severe reactions need urgent medical attention.

### **Are there likely to be any other food allergies?**

Children with sesame seed allergy may also be allergic to other seeds. They may also be allergic to peanuts and tree nuts. Seek medical advice before excluding any of these other foods as this may not be necessary.

### **How do we diagnose sesame seed allergy?**

The diagnosis is based on a history of a typical reaction after contact with sesame containing products. Positive allergy tests skin prick or blood IgE tests support the diagnosis, but should not be used alone, as people can have positive allergy tests but tolerate the food without getting a reaction.

Skin prick tests are safe and can be done in clinic provided that the child has not had any antihistamines for a few days. Blood tests are not affected by antihistamines, but the results are only available a week or so after the clinic appointment.

If the diagnosis is uncertain an oral sesame seed challenge is sometimes recommended.

### **How can you avoid sesame seeds?**

Foods containing sesame seeds include tahini, hummus, crackers, breads, bread sticks, burger buns, salads, cereal (health) bars, gomashio, halvah and falafel.

Breads baked in in-store bakeries can also become contaminated with sesame seeds.

When eating out, check the ingredients. Middle Eastern, Chinese, Thai and Japanese foods can all contain sesame seeds. Sesame seeds can also be called Juljulan, Zelzlane, Sumsum, Sinsim in Arabic, Zhī Má, Hú Má in Chinese, Goma, Shima in Japanese and Til in Hindi, Sanskrit Urdu.

#### **References**

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