

## Legumes and pulses allergy

Legumes such as peanuts and peas, and their dried seeds known as pulses, are often used when cooking and manufacturing food. If you think you might be allergic to any legumes or pulses, this page will help you understand and manage your allergy.

### What are legumes and pulses?

Legumes are a family of plants which include peanuts, soya, lupin, green beans, green peas, and fenugreek.

Dried seeds known as pulses are also part of the legume family. These include chickpeas, lentils, kidney beans and other dried beans.

### What is a food allergy?

Legume and pulse allergies are types of food allergies. Food allergy occurs when the body's immune system wrongly identifies a food as a threat. When this happens, the body releases chemicals, such as histamine, in response. It is the release of these chemicals that causes symptoms.

### What are the symptoms of a food allergy?

The symptoms of a food allergy usually come on quickly, within minutes of eating the food.

Mild to moderate symptoms may include:

- a red raised rash (known as hives or urticaria) anywhere on the body
- a tingling or itchy feeling in the mouth
- swelling of lips, face or eyes
- stomach pain or vomiting.

More serious symptoms are often referred to as the ABC symptoms and can include:



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- AIRWAY - swelling in the throat, tongue or upper airways (tightening of the throat, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing).
- BREATHING - sudden onset wheezing, breathing difficulty, noisy breathing.
- CIRCULATION - dizziness, feeling faint, sudden sleepiness, tiredness, confusion, pale clammy skin, loss of consciousness.

The term for this more serious reaction is anaphylaxis (anna-fill-axis).

In extreme cases there could be a dramatic fall in blood pressure. The person may become weak and floppy and may have a sense of something terrible happening. Any of the ABC symptoms may lead to collapse and unconsciousness and, on rare occasions, can be fatal.

Most healthcare professionals consider an allergic reaction to be anaphylaxis when it involves the ABC symptoms. [Read more about anaphylaxis.](#)

## Getting a diagnosis

If you think you may be allergic to a legume, see your GP who can refer you to a specialist allergy clinic if needed. They can find a clinic in your area from the [British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology \(BSACI\)](#)

It's important to get a referral even if your symptoms were mild because it can be hard to tell if future allergic reactions could be more serious.

Once you get a referral, the consultant will discuss your medical history and symptoms with you. They might suggest skin prick, blood tests, and food challenge tests to help diagnose the allergy and work out how serious it may be. [Read more about allergy testing.](#)

Some clues that you might be at higher risk are:

- you have already had a serious reaction, with any of the 'ABC' symptoms
- you have asthma, especially if it is not well controlled
- you have reacted to a tiny amount of the food.



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## Treating symptoms

If you have mild allergic symptoms, you may be prescribed antihistamine medicine that you take by mouth. If you are at risk of anaphylaxis, you may be prescribed adrenaline to use in an emergency.

Adrenaline comes in pre-loaded adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs) that are designed to be easy to use. Make sure you know how and when to use them. Ask your healthcare professional to show you how to use your specific brand of AAI. You can also find help on the manufacturer's website where you can get a free trainer AAI to practise with.

The adrenaline auto-injectors prescribed in the UK are:

- Emerade
- EpiPen
- Jext

You must carry two AAIs with you at all times, as you may need to use a second one if your symptoms don't improve after five minutes or get worse.

If you have asthma, and it is not well controlled, this could make an allergic reaction worse. Make sure you discuss this with your GP or allergy specialist and take any prescribed medicines.

[Read more about what to do in an emergency.](#)

## Will you be allergic to more than one legume?

If you react to one member of the legume family, it's possible you could react to another. This is known as "cross-reactivity", where the proteins in one food are similar to those in another.

Some people with a legume allergy will only react to one legume, but some people will react to others as well. If you often eat other legumes and don't have any symptoms, there's no reason to suspect that you will become allergic to them and you can usually carry on eating them, but always follow the advice of your allergy specialist.

It's difficult to know how many people are allergic to multiple legumes, as studies show varying results. One study found that five out of 100 people (one in 20) with an allergy to one legume also have an allergy to another. Other studies have higher estimates, but

these depend on where the studies were done and how common these foods are in the diet.

If you have any concerns about allergies to other legumes, discuss these with your doctor or allergy specialist. They will be able to give you specific advice and talk to you about which foods you should avoid.

## Avoiding legumes

### When you're shopping

To avoid any legumes you're allergic to read the ingredient lists on food packets carefully every time you shop.

Only peanuts, soya and lupin are included in the list of top 14 major food allergens in the UK. This means they must be highlighted on food ingredients labels, in bold for example.

All other legumes and pulses are not included in the top 14 list, which means they are not highlighted, but they are listed in the ingredients.

### When eating out

When you buy catered food, such as in restaurants and takeaways, speak to staff directly as they may not be aware that legumes can cause allergic reactions. Make sure you name the specific legume or pulse you're allergic to.

[Read more about eating out safely here](#)

### Examples of legumes, pulses, and the foods they're contained in

The table shows examples of legumes and the products you might find them in. Remember, it is rare that you would need to avoid many of these. It's very unusual to react to all legumes.



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Legumes	Foods they may be found in
Acacia gum / gum arabic (E414)	Yogurt Jelly Sauces – savoury and sweet Lollies and frozen lollies Confectionary
Adzuki bean	Cooked dishes such as curries, vegetable casseroles, chilli dishes and vegetarian dishes
Bean sprouts	Asian meals and sides such as salads, Thai salads, sweet and sour dishes, Chinese dishes and spring rolls
Black gram	Dips Cooked dishes such as Indian food, chilli, vegetarian and vegan dishes
Black eyed beans	Cooked dishes such as curries, vegetable casseroles, chilli dishes and vegetarian dishes Some cakes, especially low GI cakes and vegan cakes
Broad bean, also called faba bean, fava bean and Windsor bean	Hummus-type dips Some coconut milks High protein foods and protein shakes. Used widely in manufactured foods such as the coating on chips, frozen foods, vegan products, bakery items, brioche and gluten free products
Butter bean, also called lima bean and Madagascar bean	Dips Cooked dishes such as chilli and vegetarian and vegan dishes
Carob / carob gum / locust bean gum (E410)	Used widely in manufactured foods Lollies Drinks and fizzy drinks Main ingredient in <i>Carobel</i> /thickener Sweets Used in hot drinks and as a chocolate substitute



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Chickpeas and Bengal gram / gram flour / besan (Bengal gram are similar to chickpeas)	Hummus Many Indian dishes and side dishes including onion bhajis and chickpea poppadoms Vegetarian and bean dishes Roasted/fried snacks Vegan meringue
Fenugreek, also called Menthi	Indian food and spice mixes including speciality spiced breads such as naan
Flageolet bean	Dips Cooked dishes such as chilli and vegetarian and vegan dishes
French bean	
Green bean	
Ground nut / peanut	See peanut
Guar gum / guaran / guar beans / cluster beans (E412)	Yogurts Jellies Jelly Jams Lollies
Gum Arabic (E414) from the acacia tree	Yogurts Jellies Jelly Jams Lollies
Haricot bean (baked bean)	Dips Cooked dishes such as chilli and vegetarian and vegan dishes
Karaya gum (E413), also called Tragacanth gum	Yogurts Jellies Jelly Jams Lollies
Kidney bean	Dips Cooked dishes such as chilli and vegetarian and vegan dishes
Lentils (all types, including brown, green and red lentils) / Cow peas / cowpeas	Dips Indian foods and side dishes such as poppadoms Lentil crisps and snacks



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Liquorice	Sweets/confectionary Liquorice Sambuca
Locust bean gum (from the carob tree) also called carob (E410)	Yogurts Jellies Jelly Jams Lollies
Lupin	Pastry Cases Coated deep-fried vegetables such as onion rings Gluten free foods Doughnuts Pizza Pasta French bread Italian baking
Mangetout	Salads Stir fry
Mung bean, green gram or golden gram	Bean dishes Vegan cakes
E479b Thermally oxidised soya bean oil interacted with mono and diglycerides of fatty acids	
Peanut, ground nut or monkey nut / peanut shoots	Satay dip or marinade Nut mixes Peanut flour Bamba peanut maize snacks BBQ foods Salads and dressings Thai food
Peas / green peas / pea shoots marrowfat peas / mushy peas	Sausages Vegan foods Crisps Chips Wasabi peas Pea snacks Pea protein in manufactured foods



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Red gram or pigeon pea. Also known as gungo peas in Jamaican food.	Dips Cooked dishes such as chilli and vegetarian and vegan dishes Jamaican food
Rice bean	Dips Cooked dishes such as chilli and vegetarian and vegan dishes
Runner bean	
Snow peas	
Snap bean	
Soy beans / soy / soya / soya bean hemicellulose / edamame beans (E416), soya oil	Tofu (soya bean curd) Vegan omelette Dairy alternatives Soy / soy sauce Tamari sauce Widely used in manufactured foods
Split peas	Soups Bean dishes
String bean	
Sugar snap pea	Stir fry Salads
Tamarind	Worcestershire sauce Tamari sauce
Tara gum (E417), also known as Peruvian carob	Sauces Salad dressings Ice cream Jellies
Tonka bean	
Tragacanth gum (E413) also called Karaya gum and goats thorn	Sauces Salad dressings Ice cream Jellies
Winged bean, ogoa bean or asparagus-pea	Dips Cooked dishes such as chilli and vegetarian and vegan dishes

If you find you can eat any of the above legumes without having a reaction, then you can keep eating them.





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## Hidden legumes

If you have tried avoiding other legumes but are still having symptoms look out for these ingredients which can contain legumes.

- Vegetable protein
- Vegetable fibre

## The following are not legumes

You don't need to avoid these ingredients which are used as thickeners and gelling agents. They are not made from legumes and pulses.

Agar (E406) – a carbohydrate found in seaweed

Carrageenan gum (E407) – a carbohydrate found in seaweed

Gellan gum (E418) – a carbohydrate secreted by bacteria called *Sphingomonas paucimobilis*

Xanthan gum (E415) – a carbohydrate produced by a bacteria called *Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *campestris*

## Key messages

- If you have symptoms after eating any legumes, visit your GP.
- If you are prescribed adrenaline auto-injectors, carry two with you at all times.
- Always be guided by your allergy specialist on which foods to avoid.
- If you have asthma, make sure it is well managed. See your GP about this.

## Feedback

Please help us to improve our information resources by sending us your feedback at: -

<https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/information-resources-feedback/>

## Sources

All the information we produce is evidence based or follows expert opinion and is checked by our clinical and research reviewers. If you wish to know the



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sources we used in producing any of our information products, please contact [info@anaphylaxis.org.uk](mailto:info@anaphylaxis.org.uk) and we will gladly supply details.

## Reviewer

The content of this factsheet has been peer-reviewed by Tanya Wright, Highly Specialised Allergy Dietitian, St Mary's Hospital, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London.

## Disclosures

We are not aware of any conflicts of interest in relation to the review of this factsheet.

## Disclaimer

The information provided in this factsheet is given in good faith. Every effort is taken to ensure accuracy. All patients are different, and specific cases need specific advice. There is no substitute for good medical advice provided by a medical professional.

## About Anaphylaxis UK

Anaphylaxis UK is the only UK-wide charity solely focused on supporting people at risk of serious, life-threatening allergic reactions. We provide information and support to people living with allergies through our free national helpline. We also campaign and fundraise to achieve our ultimate aim, to create a safer environment for all people at risk of serious allergies. Visit our website [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk) and follow us to keep up-to-date with our latest news. We're on Facebook @anaphylaxisUK, LinkedIn, Instagram @anaphylaxisUK, Twitter @AnaphylaxisUK and YouTube.