

# Allergies, dating and relationships

**Dating and relationships are an important and healthy part of life. As you get older, you may worry about how your allergy could affect your relationships. This leaflet is intended to answer your questions and help with your concerns. If you need more information, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.**

Dating can be tricky enough without worrying about your allergy too. You need to remember that an allergy, like any other medical condition, is just one part of your life.

## Talking about your allergy on a first date

Good communication is important from the start of any relationship. It is a good idea to tell the person that you are dating about your allergy while you are still getting to know each other. You may find it helpful to tell them before your first date. If this person is worth dating, they will be supportive.

You can start a conversation by saying "What are 3 unique things about you?" or "Tell me something about you that not many people know". When it is your turn to share information, you can then talk about your allergy.

Your partner may:

- want to find out more about your allergy straight away
- prefer to do some research and then talk to you in more detail or ask questions later

If they do not want to continue the conversation about your allergy, you can talk about something else instead.

Another option is to start a conversation about food. This conversation does not have to be in person and you may find it easier to send a text message. You can share your enthusiasm for something that you enjoy eating and then mention why you cannot eat all foods.

Here are some more tips on talking about your allergy:

- Keep the first conversation about your food allergy clear and simple. If you talk about your allergy in a lot of detail on a first date, this may be overwhelming for your partner.
- If your partner has the wrong idea about allergies, this may be because they have read inaccurate information. You can gently help them to understand better.
- Think about going to a place other than a restaurant on your first date. For example, you could go bowling or for a walk. If you do go to a restaurant, choose one that will accommodate your food allergy.
- When you get to know your partner, you could do grocery shopping or cook a meal together. This gives you a chance to show your partner how to look at ingredients and avoid your allergens (ingredients that cause an allergic reaction).

## General safety tips for dating if you have an allergy

Here are some general tips to stay safe when you go on dates if you have an allergy:

- Keep your emergency medicines with you at all times, even if you do not plan to eat during the date. This includes 2 adrenaline auto-injectors if you have been prescribed them.
- Make sure that your partner understands and respects your food allergies.
- Ask your partner what they have eaten that day before you kiss each other.
- Teach your partner how to use your adrenaline auto-injector and check that they are familiar with your allergy action plan.
- Talk to your doctor about any concerns if you are not sure what to do and need more advice.

## Kissing

Kissing can cause allergic reactions in people with food allergies. Allergic reactions after kissing mostly happen if the food has just been eaten. However, it is possible to have an allergic reaction up to a few hours later. If you plan to kiss or be intimate with your partner, you will need to ask them:

- not to eat the foods that you are allergic to for several hours before your date
- to avoid eating these foods during your date

Sharing kitchen utensils, water bottles or drinks can also cause allergic reactions.

A study in 2006 looked at the amount of peanut found in saliva after eating peanut butter. Some peanut was found in the saliva both immediately and 1 hour after eating the peanut butter. However, no peanut was found in the saliva several hours later after eating a peanut-free lunch.

The study results show how you can reduce your risk of an allergic reaction. Before kissing, it is best to wait:

- for several hours after your partner has eaten the food that you are allergic to
- until after your partner has eaten another meal that does not contain your food allergen

However, it is important not rely on your partner chewing gum or brushing their teeth immediately after eating your allergen. This does not reduce the risk of an allergic reaction to the food.

## Sex and intimacy

The guidance in this section is intended for you to follow together with the safe sex practices taught in school.

If you are intimate with your partner, this can cause allergies to flare up. For example:

- eczema symptoms can flare up due to heat and sweat
- an asthma attack can be triggered by emotions and physical activity

You may be on a food oral immunotherapy programme to help you build up tolerance to foods that cause an allergic reaction. For example, you may be having treatment with a medicine called Palforzia<sup>®</sup> for a peanut allergy. If you have sex 1 hour before or 2 hours after your food dose, this could cause you to have a food allergy reaction. It is best to avoid sex at these times.

## Latex allergy and contraception

Some condoms and diaphragms contain latex (rubber). If you have a known latex allergy, you will need to avoid products that contain latex because they can result in allergic reactions. There are also condoms that contain a protein found in cow's milk to make the latex smooth. The amount of this ingredient is very small but it could cause an allergic reaction or skin irritation and soreness.

You can use condoms made out of plastic instead. There are 2 types called polyurethane and polyisoprene condoms. Non-latex condoms are available in the same places that you can find latex condoms, such as pharmacies, grocery stores and sexual health clinics. It is important to plan ahead to keep yourself and your partner safe.

## Lubricants

Lubricants to help with friction or dryness during sex can have scents, dyes or preservatives that cause allergic reactions. You may want to choose products that are fragrance-free.

## Aeroallergens

Aeroallergens are substances carried in the air that can cause allergic reactions. Pet dander (flakes of skin that are shed), house dust mites and different detergents on bedding, materials and clothes may increase allergic symptoms. For this reason, it is important to carry your medicines and avoid any possible triggers if you plan to be intimate with your partner.

## Support and more information

Here are some suggestions for where you can get support or more information:

- Information on relationships from the national charity Allergy UK  
[web](http://www.allergyuk.org/living-with-an-allergy/parent-pathways/12-17/relationships) [www.allergyuk.org/living-with-an-allergy/parent-pathways/12-17/relationships](http://www.allergyuk.org/living-with-an-allergy/parent-pathways/12-17/relationships)
- Information on relationships and dating from the US charity FARE (Food Allergy Research and Education)  
[web](http://www.foodallergy.org/resources/relationships-and-dating) [www.foodallergy.org/resources/relationships-and-dating](http://www.foodallergy.org/resources/relationships-and-dating)
- Information on condoms from the NHS  
[web](http://www.nhs.uk/contraception/methods-of-contraception/condoms) [www.nhs.uk/contraception/methods-of-contraception/condoms](http://www.nhs.uk/contraception/methods-of-contraception/condoms)
- Information on finding sexual health services from the NHS  
[web](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/sexual-health-services) [www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/sexual-health-services](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/sexual-health-services)
- Information about dating with a food allergy from the Allergy 250K youth project in Australia  
[web](http://allergy250kteens.org.au/dating-with-a-food-allergy) [allergy250kteens.org.au/dating-with-a-food-allergy](http://allergy250kteens.org.au/dating-with-a-food-allergy)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about how your allergy could affect your relationships, please contact the allergy service, [phone](tel:02071883300) 020 7188 3300 (children's services) or 020 7188 5830 (adults' services), Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm  
[email](mailto:gst-tr.allergypaediatrics@nhs.net) [gst-tr.allergypaediatrics@nhs.net](mailto:gst-tr.allergypaediatrics@nhs.net)

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [web](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets) [www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)



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