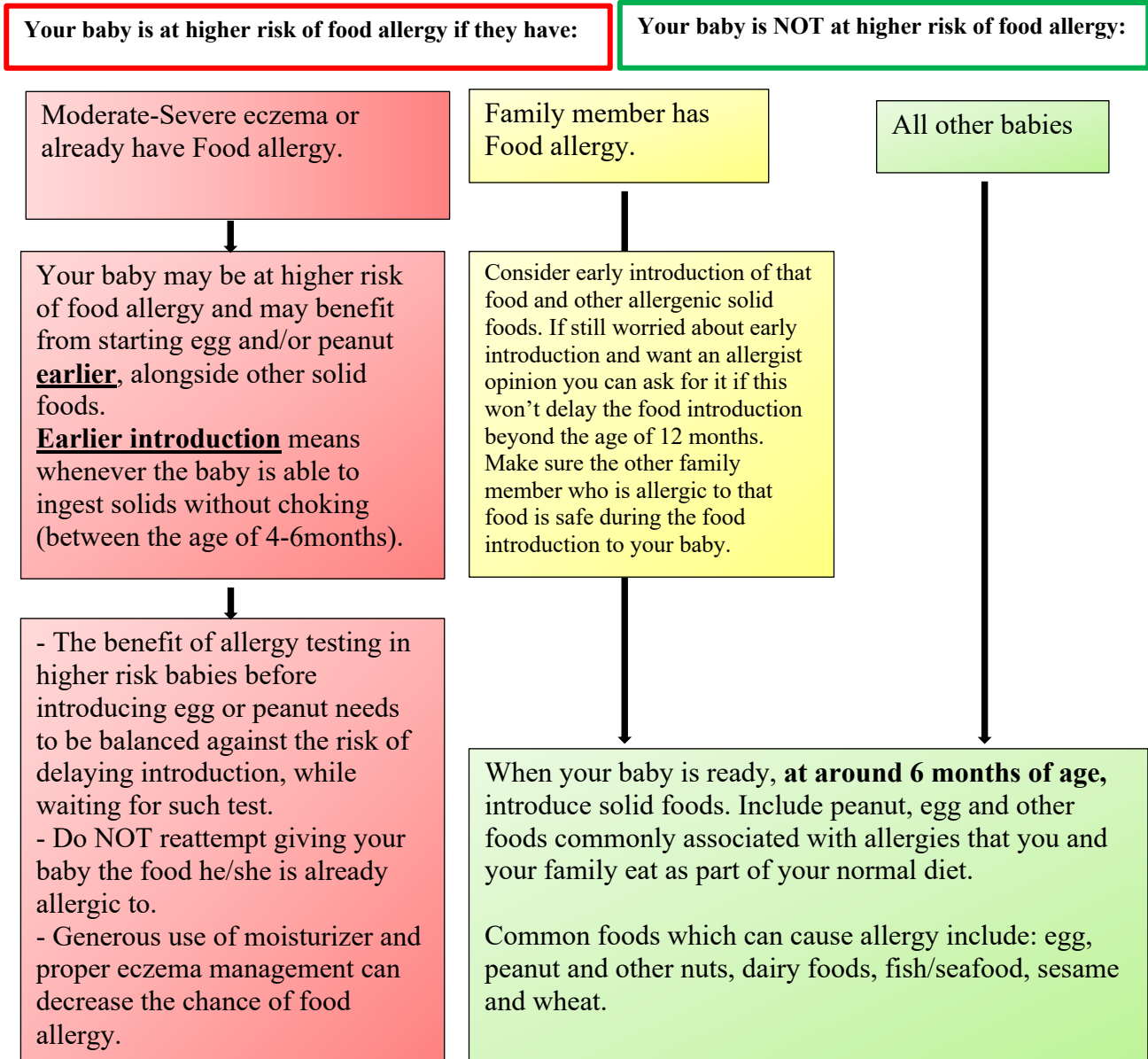


Preventing food allergy in your baby: A summary for parents
Adopted with modification from BSACI

- Exclusive breastfeeding for around the first 6 months of life.
- From around 6 months of age (but not before 4 months), introduce complementary foods (solids) including foods known to cause food allergies – alongside continued breastfeeding.
 - **Excluding** egg and peanut from your baby’s diet **may increase their risk** of food allergy.
 - When your baby is ready, at around 6 months of age, you can start to feed them complementary foods (solids) – usually as pureed foods. Start by offering small amounts of vegetables, fruit, starchy foods, protein, pasteurized dairy. Never add salt or sugar if they don't need it.
 - In addition to fruit and vegetables, include foods that are part of your family’s normal diet which are commonly associated with food allergies. If this includes egg and peanut, aim to introduce these before the age of one year, and continue to feed these to your baby as part of their usual diet.



INTRODUCING SOLID FOODS

Babies differ in when they are ready for solid foods. Signs include:

- being able to sit relatively unaided in a highchair, with their head steady
- trying to reach out to grab food and put in their mouth
- loss of the “tongue-thrust” reflex; babies who aren’t ready push the food back out with their tongue, so they get more around their face than they do in their mouths.

When you and your baby are ready (from around 6, but not before 4 months of age), offer them small amounts of pureed vegetables, fruit, starchy foods and protein. Never add salt or sugar – they don't need it. **Once your baby is eating these, you can introduce the following:**

Egg (both egg white and yolk)	You can offer your baby scrambled egg, omelet, soft or hard-boiled egg. You can mash egg into other foods e.g. pureed fruit/vegetables, yogurt, or baby cereals such as rice. Aim for at least 1 egg over the course of a week.
Peanut	Never give whole nuts, coarsely chopped nuts or chunks of peanut butter to children under 5 years of age, as these are a choking risk. You can use smooth peanut butter, “puffed peanut” snacks, or grind whole peanuts to a fine powder. Mix with pureed fruits/vegetables, yogurt, porridge, baby cereals etc. or add to baby’s milk. Suggested recipe: Mix 1 teaspoon of smooth peanut butter with 1 tablespoon of warm water (boiled) or baby’s milk, or some pureed fruit/vegetable. Aim for 2 level teaspoons 3 times per week.

In babies at higher risk of food allergy, studies have shown that starting egg and peanut earlier – from 4 months of age – can help prevent food allergy to egg and peanut.

If part of your family’s diet, aim to introduce egg and peanut before the age of 12 months, and **continue to give them to your baby regularly as part of their usual diet** as they get older.

You may also like to introduce some of the following foods if eaten as part of your family’s diet:

Tree nuts	Never give whole nuts or coarsely chopped nuts to children under 5 years old. Use finely-ground nuts, or a nut butter (e.g. almond butter, cashew butter etc). Mix with pureed fruits/vegetables or add to yogurt, porridge or baby’s milk.
Cow’s milk	Yogurt, sour cream. Or add fresh whole milk to meals e.g. porridge, mashed potato.
Wheat	Cereal, well-cooked pasta shapes, toast fingers, couscous
Seeds	Hummus which contains tahini (sesame) paste; crushed seeds added to yogurt, porridge or mixed with pureed or mashed fruit/vegetables
Fish, seafood	Pureed, flaked or mashed cooked fish (e.g. cod, haddock, salmon, trout) or seafood (e.g. prawns, crab, mussels)

Only give your baby foods in a form that is age-appropriate, to avoid risk of choking

Include iron rich foods in your baby’s diet, such as fortified cereals, meat, poultry, fish, cooked egg and pulses/legumes e.g. chickpeas, lentils.

If your baby already has a food allergy:

Speak to a healthcare professional so that they can advise you. **You should not feed your baby a food that they are allergic to**, but you can still introduce the other foods mentioned above.

Tips for introducing allergenic foods

Introduce each new food one at a time (don't give 2 new foods on the same day):

- Start low e.g. ¼ to ½ teaspoon and then increase *slowly* over the next few days
- Once successfully introduced, continue to give the food to your baby regularly as part of their usual diet (e.g. at least once per week)
- If your baby doesn't seem interested, try again on another day. It is important to go at your baby's pace.

Some babies will develop a food allergy despite following this advice:

- Always stay with your baby when feeding them, to reduce the risk of choking. If you think your baby may be having an allergic reaction, **stop** giving the food and seek medical advice.
- Allergy testing can help identify *individual* babies at higher risk of food allergy. The benefits of testing in higher risk babies – before giving them egg or peanut to eat – needs to be balanced against the chance that this could delay introduction (e.g. due to waiting for an appointment) and so increase the risk of allergy. You may want to discuss this with your healthcare professional, especially if your baby has bad eczema.

How to spot an allergic reaction

If you think your baby may be having an allergic reaction, **stop** giving the food and seek medical advice.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction are shown on page 1.

It can be easier to spot any symptoms of an allergic reaction to a new food if you:

- Choose a day when your baby is well.
- Introduce each new food slowly, one at a time.

Many foods (e.g. citrus fruit, tomato, strawberries) can irritate the skin and cause a red rash (especially around the mouth) in babies – this is not food allergy and you do not need to avoid the food. Smearing food on to the skin does not help identify a possible allergy to that food.

If someone else in the home has a food allergy

Plan how to feed your baby that food, whilst keeping the person with the food allergy safe, for example:

- Only feed your baby the food in a specific place e.g. a highchair, kitchen table
- Wash your baby's face and hands after giving the food
- Wash all utensils and surfaces that have been in contact with the food. You only need to use normal washing-up liquid and warm water, just as you would if cooking/handling raw meat.
- Check to see if any food might have dropped on to the floor etc.
- Consider whether it is possible to give the food when the person with food allergy is not at home, for example asking other relatives and friends to help if you have a food allergy yourself.

Disclaimer: This information sheet is not a substitute for medical advice and any questions regarding a medical diagnosis or treatment should be directed to a medical practitioner.