

# Medicines Safety Sub-Group

## Medicines Safety Bulletin

This bulletin places **peanut allergy** under the spotlight.

**The Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has recommended that patients known to be allergic to peanuts should not use medicines containing **arachis oil**.**

Although the BNF states that refined arachis oil (Arachis Oil BP) is unlikely to cause an allergic reaction, this relies upon the oil being adequately refined so that all peanut protein is removed. The manufacturers of the majority of pharmaceutical products which contain arachis oil advise that the products **should not** be used by patients with peanut allergy.

Due to potential cross-sensitivity between allergy to peanut and soya, some manufacturers advise that patients with soya allergy should also avoid their products that contain arachis oil. Substantial cross-sensitivity is also known to exist between peanuts, tree nuts and sesame, and patients with such allergies may consequently be advised to avoid each group

### **A Patient's Story:**

A child with peanut allergy was prescribed Naseptin<sup>®</sup> cream. The product had been used for two weeks when the patient's mum read the patient information leaflet and noticed that it should not be used by patients with peanut allergy.

Although the patient did not experience an allergic reaction from using Naseptin<sup>®</sup> cream, this caused confusion and unnecessary distress for the patient and their family.

### **Why did it happen?**

- The prescriber was not aware that the product contained arachis oil
- The dispensing pharmacy did not check allergy status
- Neither the prescribing nor the dispensing system highlighted the potentially inappropriate prescription. This is because arachis oil is an excipient in the formulation, rather than an active ingredient, so it does not get captured on clinical system allergy databases.

### **What can be done to make it safer?**

- **Take extra care** when prescribing, dispensing and/or administering for patients with serious allergies.

Refer to the clinical record and ensure the allergy is appropriately documented, including adding it to dispensing software, the Summary Care Record and as special note for those patients on SystmOne so that all this information is readily accessible to out of hours clinicians.

The Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) should be checked to confirm whether medication contains relevant allergens. Be aware that unlicensed medicines and food supplements may not be manufactured to the same standards as licensed pharmaceuticals and can consequently carry additional risk.

- **Consider** the severity of the patient's allergy, the evidence, and MHRA's recommendation; only prescribe in *exceptional* circumstances where benefits outweigh risks AND there is no alternative available.
- **Educate and empower patients** to check whether products contain relevant excipients when purchasing medicines and/or collecting prescriptions.
- **Check** that the patient has at least two in date adrenaline auto-injectors if already routinely prescribed.

### Examples of medicines containing relevant excipients (NOT exhaustive)

Peanut	Almond	Sesame	Soya
Abidec Drops	Almond oil ear drops	Alfacalcidol capsules	Adcal-D3 chewable
Arachis oil (ground-nut oil)	OTC emollient (Boots)	Haloperidol injection	Balneum (Plus)
Cerumol ear drops		Fluphenazine injection	Zeroneum
Dihydrotestosterone oral solution			Zeroguent
Estriol cream			Some desogestrel tablets
Nandrolone injection			Some metered-dose inhalers*
Naseptin cream			Many feeds/borderline substances
Peppermint oil capsules			
Progesterone capsules			
Zinc and castor oil cream/ointment			

#### Inhalers\*

It is not widely known that some commonly used inhalers contain soya lecithin, an emulsifier that is made from soya beans e.g. Soltel®. If a patient is allergic to soya beans or to peanuts, this could pose a problem. Always check product literature prior to prescribing.

#### Side effects to a medicine, vaccine, herbal or complementary remedy

All medicines can cause side effects (commonly referred to as adverse drug reactions or ADRs by healthcare professionals).

Yellow Card reports are assessed by a team of medicine safety experts made up of doctors, pharmacists and scientists who study the benefits and risks of medicines.

If a new side effect is identified, the safety profile of the medicine in question is carefully looked at, as well as the side effects of other medicines used to treat the same condition. <https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/the-yellow-card-scheme/>

#### References:

UKMi Medicines Q&A, Arachis oil in medicines—what are the risks of developing peanut allergy? 2014.

[www.mhra.gov.uk](http://www.mhra.gov.uk) accessed 8.7.19

<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc> accessed 8.7.19