

Early Introduction of Allergenic Foods for the Prevention of Food Allergy – The Asian Perspective

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There is now emerging evidence for the early introduction of allergenic foods, such as peanut and egg, in the prevention of food allergies in at risk infants. This has led to recent publication of guidelines in the US and Europe recommending early peanut introduction for high-risk infants with severe eczema or egg allergy. Peanut allergy is, however, much less prevalent in Asia compared to the West. Varying patterns of food allergy are seen even within Asian countries - such as a predominance of wheat allergy in Japan and Thailand and shellfish allergy in Singapore and the Philippines. Whether the same benefit can be derived from early introduction of other allergenic food such as cow's milk, shellfish and wheat are still uncertain. Customs and traditions, such as diet and infant feeding practices, also differ between Asian populations. Hence, there are unique challenges in adapting guidelines on early allergenic food introduction to the Asian setting. It is therefore debatable whether rationale guidelines can be formulated on the timely introduction of allergenic food in high-risk infants in Asia.