

# Cambridge study of peanut allergy therapy shows 84 per cent success

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The results of the largest single trial of its kind worldwide are published in *The Lancet* today. Allergy experts found that 84 and 91 per cent of the two groups of children treated with this new form of immunotherapy could eat at least five peanuts a day.

Peanut allergy affects one in fifty children and is the most common cause of fatal food allergy reactions. People with peanut allergy risk anaphylactic shock or even death if they become accidentally exposed to peanut. The fear of accidental exposure in food reduces their quality of life and severely limits the social habits of allergic individuals, their families and even their friends.

The research, supported by the MRC-NIHR (Medical Research Council and National Institute for Health Research) partnership, involved young people, aged between seven and sixteen, eating daily doses of peanut protein. Starting with a tiny dose and slowly building up over four to six months, they trained their bodies to tolerate the equivalent of five whole peanuts. Peanut allergy affects around half a million people in the UK and over 10 million people across the globe. Unlike other childhood food allergies, such as cow's milk, peanut allergy rarely goes away.

The Cambridge allergy research team, led by

Dr Andrew Clark and Dr Pamela Ewan, are world-renowned and have been leading allergy research for more than 20 years.

Dr Clark said: "Before treatment children and their parents would check every food label and avoiding eating out in restaurants.

"Now most of the patients in the trial can safely eat at least five whole peanuts. The families involved in this study say that it has changed their lives dramatically."

Dr Ewan added: "This large study is the first in the world to have had such a good outcome, and is an important advance in peanut allergy research."

Lena Barden, 11, from Histon in Cambridgeshire, said: "I felt like I had won a prize after I found out I had been picked for the active group. It meant a trip to the hospital every two weeks. A year later I could eat 5 whole peanuts with no reaction at all. The trial has been an experience and adventure that has changed my life and I've had so much fun. But I still hate peanuts!"

Thomas Baragwanath, 16, from Holbeach, Lincolnshire, said: "The trial has helped me so much. I don't have to worry when I go out with my friends about what I'm eating and where it's come from 'What's in it? Where's it been prepared?' - I don't have to worry at all. It has

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been a massive problem for me since I was a small child and I'm so thankful I'm getting rid of it. It has really helped me a lot."

Anna O'Hara, 14, from Coventry, said: "I am very glad to be on this trial as it has meant I can go to more restaurants and try a wider variety of food. Also, I am able to go to friends' houses more without the worry of having an allergic reaction whilst away from home. It has also meant I am able to go on more school trips without my mum having to come along."

Maureen Jenkins, Director of Clinical Services at Allergy UK, said: "The fantastic results of this study exceed expectation. Peanut allergy is a particularly frightening food allergy, causing constant anxiety of a reaction from peanut traces. This is a major step forward in the global quest to manage it."

Lynne Regent, CEO of the Anaphylaxis Campaign said: "We welcome the positive results of this important study. Such a good outcome for so many of the children who took part demonstrates the importance of oral desensitisation treatment in transforming the lives of those with food allergy. We look forward to seeing further developments in this area to improve patient outcomes."

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The trial was carried out over five and a half years in the NIHR Wellcome Trust Clinical Research Facility at Addenbrooke's, part of Cambridge University Hospitals (CUH). It was funded by the MRC-NIHR partnership through the Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation (EME) Programme. Initial pilot work was funded by the Evelyn Trust, Cambridge.

The next step is to make peanut immunotherapy widely available to patients. Further investigation and a licensing review will be required to obtain a product licence from the regulatory authorities, which will take several years. In the meantime, CUH is planning to open a peanut allergy clinic that would make a range of services, including immunotherapy on a named patient basis, available to patients. CUH is working with partners on private and publically funded models.

For further information about the development of peanut immunotherapy and when it will become available in clinics, please register your interest at [www.cambridgeallergytherapy.com](http://www.cambridgeallergytherapy.com).