

## Should we be eating peanuts?



If you have been anywhere near a school lately you will be well aware that peanut allergies are a real concern. Many schools have barred them from being brought on the premises, such is the severity of the reactions of some.

But what if you don't have a peanut allergy? Should you be eating peanuts?

Many people assume that I would be all in favour of peanuts; they are natural, after all, with a high fat and protein content, and are full of vitamins (magnesium, folate, vitamin E) and even fibre. There are, however, a few facts that you need to know about peanuts.

Firstly, peanuts – contrary to their name – are not nuts. They are, in fact, legumes. Secondly, they have a high omega 3 to 6 fat ratio. Given that our modern diets tend to already be way too high in omega 6 fatty acids, this doesn't help, especially when it comes to heart health.

The biggest concern with peanuts, though, is the aflatoxin mould that infects them. These moulds are among the most carcinogenic substances known. What this means is that peanuts either contain a cancer-causing mould, or they are sprayed with large amounts of pesticides in order to reduce the mould to acceptable levels. Either way, it is not great.

I know it is annoying that I am recommending you avoid the most readily available, cheapest "nuts" on the market, but it is what it is. By all means eat plenty of real nuts (assuming no allergies) – cashews, walnuts, brazil nuts and almonds. They are a great source of protein, healthy fats, fibre and many vitamins.

So enjoy plenty of nuts and seeds as part of your healthy diet – but steer clear of the peanuts!