In 2017, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases-sponsored expert panel released recommendations about the early introduction of peanut foods as a means to prevent peanut allergy.¹ The new guidelines recommend the early introduction of peanut protein in infants between 4-6 months of age, depending on the risk for allergy development, to prevent peanut allergy. This is based on research that showed that early introduction significantly reduced peanut allergy among children at high risk due to severe eczema or egg allergy.²

In fact, a dozen health organizations from around the world, including the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), developed a Consensus Communication on Early Peanut Introduction and the Prevention of Peanut Allergy in High-Risk Infants.³ AAP guidelines also say waiting to introduce “high risk” proteins past 4-6 months does not prevent food allergies for those not at risk.⁴

In spite of the evidence, some parents are still anxious about introducing peanut protein to their children, particularly those with a family history of food allergies.⁵ Health professionals like you are key to helping overcome parents’ hesitancy in order to effectively implement the new recommendations.

Here are some suggestions:

- Become familiar with the research and recommendations yourself, so you can confidently communicate them to patients. You can learn more via the Addendum Guidelines for the Prevention of Peanut Allergy in the United States: Report of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases-sponsored expert panel, or at peanutallergyfacts.org.

- Share the recommendations early and often with parents of infants who are starting solid foods around 4-6 months of age.

- For those infants at high risk, educate their parents about potential food allergy reactions, recognizing that the vast majority of children do not have food allergies.

- Follow the Guidelines to determine if infants with eczema or an existing egg allergy will benefit from pre-introduction evaluation or testing.

1. Thin 2 tsp. of peanut butter with 2-3 tsp. hot water. Allow to cool before serving.

2. Blend 2 tsp. of peanut butter into 2-3 Tbsp. of foods like infant cereal, applesauce, yogurt (if already tolerating dairy), pureed chicken or tofu.

3. Stir in 2 tsp. of powdered peanut butter into 2 Tbsp. of previously tolerated pureed fruits or vegetables.

4. Introduce a peanut-containing teething food such as Bamba® brand. 21 pieces is the recommended serving of Bamba®.

5. Older teething infants who are self feeding, may enjoy homemade peanut butter teething biscuits (find these and other recipes at NationalPeanutBoard.org).

Remember:
Whole nuts should not be given to children under 5 years of age. Peanut butter directly from a spoon or in lumps/dollops should not be given to children less than 4 years of age. Parents should discuss their child’s dietary needs with a pediatric healthcare professional. Following evaluation, high-risk infants should eat peanut foods three times per week. Other infants should eat peanut foods consistent with the family’s eating habits.