



THE BRITISH DIETETIC ASSOCIATION

The Professional Association for Registered Dietitians

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BDA Welcomes Findings of House of Lords Allergy Report

The British Dietetic Association (BDA) today welcomed the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee's report into allergy testing and treatment and its call for the establishment of specialist allergy centres across the country. The BDA did, however, voice concerns on the suggestion of withdrawing peanut avoidance advice.

Pauline Douglas, honorary chairman of the British Dietetic Association, said: "We welcome the recommendations that allergy centres are co-ordinated and that there be one allergy centre per strategic health authority. We especially endorse their calls for dietitians to be included as core members of the healthcare team. Dietitians play an important role not only in providing specialist advice to allergy sufferers but also in supplying expert training to primary and acute healthcare professionals. Dietitians are the only statutorily recognised nutrition professionals and must be at the heart of planning testing and treatment nutrition service provision in healthcare and education. There is presently an abundance of dietitians in the UK but many face unemployment as, over recent times, dietetic posts have been cut in the NHS. I hope these findings encourage Trusts and primary care providers to reverse this trend.

"We are also pleased that the report calls for robust research into the use of complementary diagnostic tests and treatments for allergy and the need for them to examine the holistic needs of the patient, assessing not only the clinical improvement of allergy symptoms, but also analysing the impact of these methods upon patient wellbeing. GPs, charities and other professionals should not endorse complementary therapy techniques without such conclusive proof."

Ruth Towell, chair of the BDA Food Allergy and Intolerance Group and senior dietitian of the Learning Early About Peanut allergy (LEAP) study, a clinical research study that aims to determine the best strategy to prevent peanut allergy in young children, added a note of caution on the report's recommendation to withdraw the government peanut avoidance advice .

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She commented: “There is currently no strong evidence available to confirm whether early avoidance or in fact consumption of peanut containing foods prevents the development of peanut allergy. The LEAP Study trial is looking into how best to deal with peanut allergy by testing both the avoidance of peanuts in infancy - as per current Department of Health guidelines - and the measured, repeated consumption of peanut-containing foods in infancy. It would be prudent to wait for results of this robust study to be published before changes to policy and practice are implemented.”

- Ends -

Media enquiries to The British Dietetic Association should be directed to our media hotline on 0870 580 2517 or pr@bda.uk.com.

Notes to Editors

1. The British Dietetic Association, founded in 1936, is the professional association for registered dietitians in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is the nation's largest organisation of food and nutrition professionals with over 6,000 members. About two-thirds of members are employed in the National Health Service. The remaining members work in education, industry, research, sport settings or freelance.
2. Registered dietitians hold the only legally-recognised graduate qualifications in nutrition and dietetics. They are experts in interpreting and translating the science of nutrition into practical ways of promoting nutritional well-being, disease treatment and the prevention of nutrition-related problems. Their advice is sound and based on current scientific evidence.
3. Registration, awarded by the Health Professions Council, is an indication that a Dietitian is fit to practise and is working within an agreed statement of conduct. For further details about The British Dietetic Association, please visit our websites: www.bda.uk.com, www.bdaweightwise.com, www.teenweightwise.com. For further details about the LEAP Study please visit the website: www.leapstudy.co.uk