

This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English. I'm Neil.

Rob

And, hello, I'm Rob.

Neil

In 6 Minute English we often talk about food, don't we, Rob?

Rob

Oh yes! And I love food. It's a very important topic.

Neil

We know that too much of the wrong kind of food can be bad for our health. But there is another way that food can be harmful for some people.

Rob

Yes, you're right. Some people have **food allergies**. They can become very ill if they eat certain foods such as peanuts, shellfish, milk and so on. So, Neil, do you have any **food allergies**?

Neil

Fortunately I don't, but my daughter is **allergic** to tree nuts, and so she gets very ill if she eats those.

Rob

Oh dear! Well, it seems as if there are more **food allergies** these days, or more people have them. Or maybe it's just in the news more.

Neil

Well, that's a very interesting point because that is the topic of this programme. Before we find out more though, here is our question. One of the most common food allergies is to peanuts. Now, what kind of food is a peanut? Is it:

A) a vegetable

- B) a nut or
- C) a legume

Rob

Oh, come on! A peanut is a nut! There's a clue in the name there, Neil! But that would be too easy, wouldn't it? So I'm going to say that I've got no idea what a legume is, so that's my answer. C.

Neil

I'll have the answer at the end of the programme. To help answer the question as to whether **food allergies** are more common now, here's Dr Adam Fox, who was speaking on The Food Programme on BBC Radio 4. Does he think there has been an increase?

Dr Adam Fox

I think we can be very confident if you look back over, say, 30 or 40 years that there are much more **allergic** problems around now than there were. So, for example, very **robust studies** that look at **prevalence** of things like **eczema**, **food allergy** do show really **significant increases** over 20, 30 years, for example.

Neil

Has there been an increase?

Rob

Well, yes. He says there have been **significant increases**. This means there has been 'a clear and obvious rise'.

Neil

Why does he think that?

Rob

He said that there have been **robust studies**. A **study** is a piece of research and if you say a study is **robust**, it means that it was 'very detailed and conducted thoroughly to a high standard'.

Neil

He said that these studies looked at the **prevalence** of a few things. **Prevalence** is a noun that refers to how common something is, how often it happens.

Rob

One of the things they looked at as well as **food allergies** was **eczema**. This is a skin condition that usually happens in childhood. The skin can get, red, itchy and painful over different parts of the body.

Neil

Here's Dr Fox again.

Dr Adam Fox

I think we can be very confident, if you look back over, say, 30 or 40 years that there are much more **allergic** problems around now than there were. So, for example, very **robust studies** that look at **prevalence** of things like **eczema**, **food allergy** do show really **significant increases** over 20, 30 years, for example.

Neil

So what is the reason for the increase in **food allergies**? Is it genetics? Dr Fox again.

Dr Adam Fox

We certainly can't **put it down to** genetics. And we now understand that there is a key role for **eczema**. So, there's a pretty direct relationship between whether you've got eczema during infancy and your likelihood of getting a **food allergy**.

Neil

Is it genetics?

Rob

No, he says 'you can't **put it down to** genetics' which means 'you can't explain it' by genetics.

Neil

In fact, according to the research, if you have **eczema** as a child, you are more likely to develop **food allergies**. Here's Dr Fox one more time.

Dr Adam Fox

We certainly can't **put it down to** genetics. And we now understand that there is a key role for **eczema**. So, there's a pretty direct relationship between whether you've got eczema during infancy and your likelihood of getting a **food allergy**.

Neil

OK! Now, time to review our vocabulary, but first, let's have the answer to the quiz question. I asked: what kind of food is a peanut? Is it:

- A) a vegetable
- B) a nut
- C) a legume

What did you say, Rob?

Rob

I said C) a legume, because that was only one I didn't know and it can't be as simple as being a nut!

Neil

An inspired guess! If you said C) legume, then congratulations. Despite the name, a peanut is not actually a nut. Rather conveniently though, we don't have time for me to explain

exactly why it's not a nut, but I'm sure you're smart enough to look it up yourself.

Rob

So, you're not going to explain it?

Neil

No, sorry, we don't have the time.

Rob

Sounds to me like you're **allergic** to hard work, Neil!

Neil

Nice link to today's vocabulary. We do have time for that. Today we've been looking at the topic of **food allergies**. This is when a particular food causes a medical problem.

Rob

The problem could be minor or it could be very serious, even fatal and these are called **allergic reactions**.

Neil

The topic has been investigated with **robust studies**. This is research that has been done in a very detailed, accurate and thorough way.

Rob

The next word was the noun **prevalence**. This is used to talk about how common or how frequent something is. In this research, they examined the **prevalence** of food allergies in certain age groups.

Neil

Closely connected to **food allergies** is **eczema**. This is a medical condition that makes your skin dry, painful and itchy over different parts of the body.

Rob

It was reported that there had been a **significant increase** in the number of people suffering from **eczema** and **food allergies**. A **significant** increase is a big and important increase.

Neil

And finally we had the phrase **to put something down to something**. This means 'to say one thing is the reason for another'. In this case, you couldn't **put** the increase in food allergies **down to** genetics.

Rob

You know what I **put** the success of 6 Minute English **down to**?

Neil

No, what's that, Rob?

Rob

Your great knowledge of different subjects and skill as a presenter and communicator.

Neil

Well, that's very kind of you... but I still don't have time to explain what a legume is! In fact now it's time to wrap up this edition of 6 Minute English. We look forward to your company again soon. In the meantime, check us out in all the usual places, online and on social media. We are BBC Learning English. Bye for now!

Rob

Goodbye!

VOCABULARY**food allergies**

medical problems that are caused by eating certain foods

robust studies

detailed, thorough and accurate research

prevalence

a noun referring to how often or how frequent something is

eczema

a medical condition of the skin

a significant increase

a large, noticeable rise in the number of something

to put something down to something

to say that one thing is the reason for another