



Walnut Trees and Tree Nut Allergy

Steve Taylor, Ph.D.

“I’ve been diagnosed with tree nut allergy, and I have a large, nut-bearing black walnut tree in my backyard. Does this tree pose a hazard?”

I know of no allergy risk associated with having a tree in your yard. The hazard would involve ingestion of the nut meat inside the hull of the nuts.

Contact with the nut meat might lead to mild skin symptoms in the area of contact (e.g., hives, itching). I have never heard that anyone has reacted from just touching the hull of an intact nut.

Sometimes hulls are pulverized after extraction of the nut meats and used for various purposes (fillers, etc.), and these ground-up hulls can be hazardous, probably because they contain some residual nut meats that are not completely extracted.

I would not suggest removal of this tree. I don’t believe that there is any solid evidence upon which to base such a decision.

If you are still concerned, ask your allergist about the possibility of conducting a skin contact experiment in the doctor’s office. Such an experiment may involve touching the hull of an intact nut to your skin and then watching for signs of a reaction. If a reaction were to occur, it would do so almost immediately and would most likely be very mild.

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