

[IMAGE]

## No Grain, No Pain

The percentage of people with asthma has increased steadily over the last half of the 20th century: a recent study showed that 35% of 12- to 14-year-olds in the United Kingdom experience allergy symptoms annually. This increase may be linked to environmental factors, including eating certain foods. Eating dietary cereals, such as wheat, rye, oats, and barley, can cause an allergic reaction to grass pollen. Providing cereals in the diets of infants, whose digestive systems are not fully mature, may increase the likelihood of grass pollen allergies later in life.

Between 1989 and 1999, the authors of a study in the journal *Clinical & Experimental Allergy* studied more than 16,000 patients admitted to the allergy unit at their clinic in Spain. Of these, 250 patients with grass-pollen asthma and 250 asthma-free individuals were selected for the study. Patients or their parents were asked about the patients' diets as infants, including how long they were breast-fed only.

People who were fed cereals in the first three months after birth were six times more likely to later suffer from grass-pollen asthma than their peers who were breast-fed only. Regarding allergy sufferers, 84% of those with an early cereal diet were allergic to grass pollen, compared to only 15% of those who were breast-fed.

Don't feed your infant cereal-based foods for at least the first year of life. Breast milk is the best nutritional source for young infants, especially during their first six months of life. Breastfeeding provides a natural and safe food source for your baby, and other studies have shown that it reduces a child's risk for conditions like heart disease, digestive problems, developmental problems, and infections.

### *Reference:*

Armentia A, Bañuelos C, Arranz ML, et al. Early introduction of cereals into children's diets as a risk-factor for grass pollen asthma. *Clinical & Experimental Allergy* 2001;31(8), pp. 1250-1255.

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