

## *Peanut Butter: Check It Out!*

### **What Is Peanut Butter?**

Peanut butter is a paste made from peanuts that are roasted and ground. Salt, and sometimes sugar, are added for flavor. To keep oil and solids from separating, additives referred to as stabilizers are often used. In “natural” peanut butter without stabilizers, oil and solids may separate. At home, if the peanut butter separates, do not pour off the oil. Instead, stir until the peanut butter is mixed well. Otherwise, it may be too stiff to spread.

### **Important Properties of Peanut Butter**

Peanut butter is a good and inexpensive source of protein. Peanut butter can be safely stored at room temperature and requires no refrigeration.

### **How Nutritious Is Peanut Butter?**

Peanut butter is a good source of protein, folic acid and other B vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber. Whether you choose smooth or chunky peanut butter, the nutrient content is the same. A two-tablespoon serving of peanut butter provides 188 calories and these nutrients:

Protein 7.9 grams	Carbohydrate 6.6 grams	Cholesterol 0 grams
Fat 16 grams		
Monounsaturated 8 grams		
Polyunsaturated 5 grams		
Saturated 3 grams		
Dietary Fiber 2 grams		
Niacin 4.2 milligrams	Folic Acid 25 micrograms	Thiamin 0.04 milligrams
Phosphorus 103 milligrams	Magnesium 50 milligrams	Iron 0.53 milligrams
Copper 0.18 milligrams	Zinc 0.80 milligrams	

A two-tablespoon serving of peanut butter provides at least 28% of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of protein for children under 10 or at least 12.5% of the RDA for teens and adults.

### **How Safe Is Peanut Butter?**

Peanut butter can be safely stored without refrigeration because it contains less than 1% moisture. It cannot support the growth of bacteria or even drought-tolerant molds. Some people are allergic to peanuts and peanut butter. Allergic reactions may include skin irritations such as rashes, hives and eczema. Gastrointestinal symptoms may include nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. In rare cases, a potentially fatal condition called anaphylaxis may occur. Persons with a known allergy to peanuts should avoid peanuts and peanut butter. Persons with a known allergy to other legumes such as soy beans, peas, garbanzos (chickpeas), etc. may want to avoid peanut

butter or exercise caution in its use. Peanut butter can be a choking hazard for young children. This can be avoided by mixing peanut butter with thinner foods such as applesauce or mashed bananas.

### **Will Peanut Butter Spoil?**

Peanut butter will not spoil like a perishable food, but because of its high oil content, it may develop rancidity during storage. Rancidity gives the product an “old, oily” off-flavor. When this occurs, the peanut butter should be replaced with a new supply.

### **How To Use and Store Peanut Butter**

Peanut butter is a delightful spread for bread, crackers or fruit. Peanut butter can be used in recipes from meat loaves to delightful desserts. To get optimal nutrition benefits from peanut butter, combine it with other foods such as milk or grain foods such as breads, crackers or tortillas. Peanut butter can be safely stored on the pantry shelf. Keep unopened peanut butter no longer than 9 - 12 months for best quality. After opening, peanut butter may still be safely stored on the pantry shelf, and storage times may vary. Discard when peanut butter develops a rancid odor or flavor. Some brands may have a “Best if Used By” date on the package.

### **References:**

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Peanut Advisory Board and Georgia Peanut Commission. Harvesting a Gold Mine of Nutrition.