

Food Allergy Basics

9 Most Common Food Allergens

- Milk
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Tree Nuts
- Soy
- Wheat
- Fish
- Shellfish
- Sesame

Note: Any food can cause a reaction

Know the Difference

Food Intolerance

when the body has difficulty digesting a certain food—the immune system is not affected

Food Allergy

an immune system response to a certain food

Anaphylaxis

a sudden, severe allergic reaction that can cause difficulty breathing, tongue and throat swelling—even DEATH

What Does an Allergic Reaction Look Like?

- Hives
- Puffy face, lips, or tongue
- Itchy red skin
- Hard to breathe
- Tight throat
- Hard to swallow
- Tummy ache
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting (Throwing-up)
- Weakness (drop in blood pressure)

In case of an Allergic Reaction
Give Epinephrine then Call 911

Self Image and Social Factors



Having food allergies can cause social and emotional responses that could include:

- Increased stress
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Anger/frustration
- Sadness/depression
- Guilt
- Denial
- Embarrassment
- Sibling rivalry
- Teasing/harassment*
- Bullying*

* Teasing, harassment, and bullying of children with food allergies is common

Positive Social and Emotional Tips

- Children with food allergies are like any other children, except they have to be careful what they eat
- Listen and allow the children to talk about their feelings
- Provide encouragement: to help the children speak up for their own health and safety
- Educate others: All children should be taught about food allergies to increase peer compassion
- Respond to teasing, harassment, and bullying—zero tolerance

Cross-Contact

Potential Sources

- Unclean hands or gloves
- Cooking oils
- Splashed or spilled food
- Fryers or grills
- Tables/chairs & desks
- Counter surface or food prep areas
- All utensils, dishes, pots/pans and cutting boards
- Meat/cheese slicers
- Soiled linens/cleaning cloths & sponges

Ways to AVOID/PREVENT

- Know what foods the child can or cannot have
- Read ALL food labels, everytime—every line
- Use clean utensils, dishes, pot/pans—must be washed thoroughly in hot soapy water and sanitized
- Practice good hand washing and use clean gloves
- NO food sharing or trading
- Clean tables, counter surfaces and food prep areas
- Have an emergency plan

IT IS IMPORTANT to always read food labels due to hidden food allergens.

Hidden Allergens

- **Eggs:** egg substitutes, mayonnaise, baked goods, noodles
- **Fish/Shellfish:** seafood flavoring, worcestershire sauce
- **Milk:** cheese, bread/buns, soup, hot dogs, canned tuna, deli meat
- **Wheat:** flours, soup/gravy mixes, snacks
- **Soy:** baked goods, breads/buns, candy
- **Peanut/Tree Nuts:** candy, chocolate, ice cream, baked goods, salads, salad dressings, barbecue sauce, cereal/granola bars
- **Sesame:** hummus, baked goods, protein and energy bars, dressings, bread crumbs

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Celebrate & Reward Children without Food

Recognition/Privileges

- Recognize over school intercom system
- Ribbon or certificate of recognition
- Photo recognition board
- Assigned as the special helper for the day
 - Line leader
 - Run errands around the school
 - Teach the class or a younger classroom
 - Read the morning announcements
- No "homework" pass
- Extra technology time
- Extra recess or favorite special class (PE, art, music)
- Eat lunch with a special friend and/or teacher
- Make a t-shirt and wear for the day
- Make a crown and be a prince or princess for the day
- Plant a seed/flower to grow a plant

Note: Creates a safe school environment.

Rewards

- Books (reading/coloring/sticker)
- Cups/water bottles
- Goodie bags with trinkets/gadgets (stickers, puzzles, toy cars, stuffed animals, finger puppets, action figures, key chains, flashlights)
- School supplies (pencils, pens, erasers, notepads, crayons/markers, rulers, pencil sharpeners)
- Physical activity gear (jump ropes, yo-yo's, frisbees, nerf balls)
- Develop a point/ticket or token system that allows students to accumulate a certain number in exchange for larger rewards such as: gift certificate to the school store, local book store/movie theatre

Note: Use **latex free** rewards.

Note: If food is absolutely necessary to celebrate, please follow your school guidelines regarding the process and read food labels carefully. It is **highly** recommended to choose items of high nutritional value and that are safe for **all** students in the classroom to consume. Remember, children with food allergies enjoy celebrations just like any other child.

Adapted from the Healthy Schools Campaign and the Center for Science in the Public Interest