



ALLERGY INFO

Preschool is an exciting time for children and parents! It's the start of a new chapter in your child's life filled with a rollercoaster of emotions: joy, anxiety, anticipation, fear, etc. For parents of children with food allergies, there is an added layer of complexity- keeping their child safe from foods that can be fatal.

Food allergies are a growing concern in schools across America. Millions of children -children who are perfectly healthy and normal in every other way- must watch every single bite they eat, or risk suffering a severe or even life-threatening reaction. In fact, food allergies claim over 200 lives and are responsible for over 30,000 emergency room visits each year. A major health issue such as this one needs to be taken very seriously.

What are food allergies?

A food allergy is an abnormal immune system response to a food protein. When children with food allergies come into contact with an offending food, even a tiny bit, they can have an allergic reaction. Contact with food is made in one of three ways: ingesting, touching and/or inhaling. Food allergies differ from other allergies because even a minuscule amount of the wrong food can be fatal. Dangerous trace amounts of the offending food in poorly labeled processed foods, on cross-contaminated utensils and carried on the hands of others pose a constant threat to those battling food allergies.

While *any* food can cause allergies, 90% of all food allergic reactions are caused by:

Egg	Shellfish	Wheat	Peanut
Fish	Soy	Milk	Tree nuts (e.g. walnut, pecan)

What are the common symptoms of a reaction?

Symptoms range from a tingling sensation in the mouth, swelling of the tongue and the throat, difficulty breathing, hives, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, drop in blood pressure, loss of consciousness, to even death. Symptoms typically appear within minutes to two hours after the person has eaten the food to which he or she is allergic.

How can you help?

1. **BE AWARE:** If there is a child with food allergies in the class, please do not bring any food that may pose a risk to that child. A 'safe snack' list should be provided for your class. If you are volunteering, make sure you know which children have allergies.
2. **WASH UP:** If your child ate a food for breakfast or lunch that another student is allergic to, please make sure that his/her hands are washed with soap and water before leaving for school. Water alone does not do the trick!
3. **NO SHARING FOOD:** Talk to your child about the importance of not sharing food at snack time. Some parents may choose not to allow their child to eat the class snack due to certain risks.
4. **AVOID CROSS-CONTAMINATION:** Baking for your child's class is fun, but it also poses a high risk for cross-contamination (i.e. 1st batch is peanut butter cookies, 2nd batch is sugar cookies). If you choose to bake a class snack, please be sure to use utensils, bowls and baking sheets that are cleaned well. Children with allergies may be provided an alternative snack in these instances.

Thank you for your help in keeping children with food allergies safe!

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