

HAND in HAND



ALLERGY ALERT! Millions of Americans have allergic reactions to food each year. Most allergies result in minor symptoms but some can cause severe and even life-threatening reactions.

Many childhood allergies (milk, egg, soy and wheat) are outgrown by the age of five. However, peanuts and tree nuts, which account for the majority of severe and fatal reactions, are often lifelong allergies.

Schools, day cares, churches, camps, and residential facilities need to know how to protect their clients and guests from allergic reactions, and at the same time protect themselves from a possible legal liability exposure.

There are common precautions all organizations should take:

- Know and follow federal, state, and local laws, and any district policies that apply.
- Have a plan in place to deal with a reaction.
- Properly store all medications.
- Make sure an emergency kit that contains a physician's standing order for epinephrine is available. Where regulations allow, keep medication in an easily accessible, secure, central location.
- Designate properly trained personnel to administer medications.
- Review the plan after an incident and make changes if needed.

Churches and other organizations often host pot luck dinners and hold bake sales to raise funds. These organizations should determine if local regulations apply. They can take these steps to reduce the chance of a guest being exposed to a food allergen:

- Tell those who are bringing cooked dishes or baked goods to keep in mind that their contribution may contain a food allergen.
- Foods should be labeled with product names and ingredients. (Having a recipe card available for people to take is the simplest way to provide the ingredient information.)
- Have a specific section for "sugar free" items.
- Note specifically if an item contains nuts.

These eight foods, and any ingredient that contains protein derived from one or more of them, are designated as "major food allergens" by the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004:

1. Milk
2. Eggs
3. Fish (e.g., bass, flounder, cod)
4. Crustacean shellfish (e.g. crab, lobster, shrimp)
5. Tree nuts (e.g., almonds, walnuts, pecans)
6. Peanuts
7. Wheat
8. Soybeans

ALLERGY ALERT!

Know the Symptoms

Allergic reactions can include:

- Hives
- Flushed skin or rash
- Tingling or itchy sensation in the mouth
- Face, tongue, or lip swelling
- Coughing or wheezing
- Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- Abdominal cramps
- Dizziness and/or lightheadedness
- Swelling of the throat and vocal cords
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of consciousness



Source

*U.S. Food and Drug Administration,
Center for Food Safety and
Applied Nutrition*

Schools and Day Care Facilities should follow these additional steps:

- Require and review health records provided by parents and physicians.
- Work with key individuals (including but not limited to teachers, principal, food service staff, and parents) to establish a prevention plan.
- Assure that all personnel who interact with the child on a regular basis understand the food allergy, can recognize symptoms, know what to do in an emergency, and work to eliminate use of food allergens in the child's meals, art and crafts projects, and incentives.
- Be prepared to handle a reaction. A properly trained staff member should be available at all times and in all locations (including field trips).
- Review policies and prevention plan with the key individuals (including the student if age appropriate) after a reaction has occurred.
- Include all students in activities. Do not discriminate against food-allergic students.
- Take threats or harassment against an allergic child seriously.

Residential Facilities are often subject to licensing rules and federal, state, and local regulations. These may vary depending upon the type of residents. Managers of residential facilities should contact their state and local licensing bureaus and health department for information.

*Includes information used with permission of The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN).
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