

FOOD ALLERGY FACT SHEET

Managing Food Allergies: Child Care Centers

1. Create a food allergy policy for your center.

- Form a food allergy team to write a food allergy policy.
- Develop an emergency plan specifically for your center(s).
- Notify parents about any reactions or exposures to an allergen.
- If outside foods are allowed, limit to pre-packaged foods with complete ingredient lists.
- Check all food labels for allergens.
- Require all children to wash their hands when entering the center and before and after meals and snacks to prevent cross-contact.
- Keep information about children with food allergies confidential.

2. Create an individual food allergy plan for each child with a food allergy.

- Obtain completed medical statement from parents/guardians (forms available from your sponsoring organization). Talk with parents/guardians if you need clarification.
- Work with parents to create a plan to treat a reaction if it occurs.
- Keep the plan where you can refer to it as needed.
- Obtain any necessary medications from parents. Be sure you understand when and how to give each medication.
- Keep medications in a location that is secure.
- Work with parents to create an affordable plan using the menus and resources that you have.

3. Take actions to avoid exposure to food allergens.

- Wash hands with soap and water before and after each task. Using water alone or hand sanitizer alone does not remove food allergens.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize all utensils and cookware after each use.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize food contact surfaces before and after each use.
- Use designated cutting boards and designated work areas to prepare food for children with food allergies.
- Store foods so that allergy-safe foods do not come in contact with other foods.
- Clean and sanitize tables and chairs before and after meals and snacks.
- Create a way for staff to be able to identify children with food allergies.
- Prevent trading or sharing food, food utensils, or food containers.
- Avoid foods that a child is allergic to in art projects or cooking activities.
- Limit food to specific areas in the center.
- Ask parents to approve items such as body lotions, sunscreens, shampoos, and creams, as some may contain allergenic ingredients that could be ingested.

4. Train staff about food allergies.

- Train staff on the center's food allergy policy and each child's individual food allergy plan.
- Train staff on symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- Instruct staff on when and how to give medications.
- Ensure confidentiality of children's medical information.



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5. Train staff to read food labels for allergens.

- Most food labels list the top eight allergenic foods using their common name (milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish, and crustacean shellfish).
- Check labels for warning statements such as “may contain,” “produced on shared equipment,” or “produced in a plant that uses.” These foods should not be served to children with allergies.
- Check ingredient labels for allergens on every product each time food is purchased.

For More Information

American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology
www.aaaai.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network
www.foodallergy.org

Food Allergy Initiative
www.faiusa.org

Food and Nutrition Information Center
www.nal.usda.gov

Food Insight (Web site sponsored by International Food Information Council Foundation)
www.foodinsight.org

National Food Service Management Institute
www.nfsmi.org

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases
www.niaid.nih.gov

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education
www.nrckids.org

School Nutrition Association
www.schoolnutrition.org

U.S. Department of Agriculture
www.usda.gov

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