

# Family Child Care Food Allergy Fact Sheets



## Managing Food Allergies in Family Child Care

In the United States, 1 in 13 children has a food allergy. One of the best ways to keep children safe in family child care settings is to create and implement a plan for managing food allergies. This plan should include ways to prevent exposures to allergens and steps for reacting to food allergy emergencies.

### 1 Create a food allergy policy.

- Create a written food allergy policy with actions to take in case a child has an allergic reaction.
- Have a plan for another adult to help in case of a medical emergency, such as an allergic reaction.
- Obtain needed training to safely care for a child with food allergies, including topics on:
  - How to administer an epinephrine auto-injector
  - How to respond to a food allergy emergency
  - What are the symptoms of an allergic reaction
- Write a policy for handling a suspected allergic reaction for a child without a known allergy.

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

- Obtain a completed medical statement from a State licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian (form available from sponsor).
  - Medical statement must provide information about which food(s) the child is allergic to and a plan of what to do if an allergic reaction occurs.
  - Talk with parents/guardians if clarification is needed about the completed forms.
  - A State licensed healthcare professional is defined as an individual authorized to write medical prescriptions under State law.
  - Registered dietitians are allowed to submit medical statements for meal modifications for children with disabilities. Registered dietitians are not required to have a State license. CACFP operations are required to implement this change by October 1, 2025.



- Work with parents/guardians to create a plan to treat a reaction based on the information in the medical statement.
- Put the plan in writing for the parents/guardians to review.
- Keep the plan where it can be referred to easily, but also kept private such as in a binder or folder. Keep all information about a child with food allergies private.
- Obtain any needed medications from parents/guardians. It is important to understand when and how to give each medication. Get additional training to administer medication as needed.
- Keep medications in a location that is secure, but accessible in an emergency.
- Work with parents/guardians to create a plan using available resources.
- Notify parents/guardians about any reactions or exposures to an allergen.

### 3 Take actions to avoid exposure to food allergens.

- Inform other family members that may have access to food and food contact surfaces in the house about the allergy issues.
- Limit food to specific areas in the house.

#### Handwashing

- Wash hands with soap and water before and after each task. Using water alone or hand sanitizer alone does not remove allergens.
- Require all children to wash their hands when entering your home, and before and after meals and snacks.
- Hang handwashing posters that are age-appropriate for children to learn how to properly wash their hands.



#### Wash, rinse, and sanitize

- Wash all utensils and cookware before and after each use.
- Wash all food contact surfaces like counters before and after each use.
- Clean tables and chairs before and after meals and snacks.
- Clean toys, objects, and other items that a young child may put in their mouth.



### Safely store and prepare allergen-free foods

- Choose allergen-free foods if possible, when planning weekly menus.
- Store foods so that allergy-safe foods and ingredients do not come in contact with other foods.
- Use designated cutting boards and designated work areas to prepare food for children with food allergies if possible. Otherwise, prepare allergy-safe food first.
- Cover and label allergen-free food after preparation. Store away from allergen-containing food.



### Monitor children

- Serve the children with food allergies first if doing family style dining. Ensure that they do not take a food item to which they are allergic.
- Prevent trading or sharing of food, food utensils, or food containers.
- Prevent children from using the same utensils for different foods in family style dining.
- Prevent children from leaving the table with food or beverages.



### Food allergies in non-food items

- Avoid foods that a child is allergic to in art projects, lesson plans, or cooking activities.
- Ask parents/guardians to approve of items such as body lotions, sunscreens, soaps, and creams as these may contain allergenic ingredients that could be ingested.



## 4 Know how to read ingredient lists on food labels for allergens.

- Check the ingredient list for allergens on every product each time the product is purchased.
  - Ingredient lists in the United States are required by the *Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act of 2004 (FALCPA)* to list the eight major food allergens that cause allergic reactions in plain language on the food label: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish, and crustacean shellfish.
  - In 2021, the *Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research Act (FASTER)* was passed into law. This act adds sesame as a major allergen. This law took effect on January 1, 2023. Contact the food manufacturer if there is any uncertainty about a food containing sesame.
  - Carefully read ingredient lists for products made outside of the United States, as they are not required to follow United States food allergen labeling laws.
- Check ingredient list for advisory statements such as “may contain,” “produced on shared equipment,” or “produced in a plant that uses.” Do not give foods with these labels to children with food allergies.
- When the label is unclear, call the food manufacturer.
- If outside foods are allowed, limit them to pre-packaged foods with complete ingredient lists or whole foods such as fruits and vegetables.



### References

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## For More Information

American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology  
[www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

Food Allergy Research & Education  
[www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

Food and Nutrition Information Center  
[www.nal.usda.gov](http://www.nal.usda.gov)

Food Insight (website sponsored by International Food Information Council Foundation)  
[www.foodinsight.org](http://www.foodinsight.org)

Institute of Child Nutrition  
[www.theicn.org/foodsafety](http://www.theicn.org/foodsafety)

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases  
[www.niaid.nih.gov](http://www.niaid.nih.gov)

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education  
<https://nrckids.org/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
[www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

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