

# 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, but accessible in an emergency.
- 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 major eight food allergens 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](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)

National Food Service Management Institute  
[www.nfsmi.org/foodallergy](http://www.nfsmi.org/foodallergy)

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  
[www.nrckids.org](http://www.nrckids.org)

School Nutrition Association  
[www.schoolnutrition.org](http://www.schoolnutrition.org)

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

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