

NUTRITION TIDBITS FOR TEACHERS

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About 6% of children ages 0-2 have food allergies. Peanut and cow's milk allergies are most common (1). It is likely that at some point in your teaching, you will come across a child with food allergies.

How to care for a child with food allergies

1) Know which children in your care have food allergies.

- The front office will ask all parents about allergies during a child's enrollment.

2) Know what to do if a child eats a food they are allergic to

- Front office staff will talk with parents to make a plan. Make sure you know the plan.
- In some cases, the front office will have an EpiPen, which is a shot with strong medication to open the child's airway. Usually 1-2 people are trained on the EpiPen. If you teach a child with allergies, know who can give the child the EpiPen and where it is kept.



3) Know signs of allergic reactions

- It is good to know the signs of an allergic reaction so you can help a child early if they react to other foods. Here are the signs of an allergic reaction:

■ Mild

- (1) Itching
- (2) Skin redness
- (3) Slight swelling
- (4) Stuffy, runny nose
- (5) Itchy, watery eyes
- (6) Red bumps (hives) anywhere on the body

■ Severe

- (1) Swelling of the mouth or tongue
- (2) Trouble swallowing or speaking
- (3) Wheezing or trouble breathing
- (4) Belly pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- (5) Dizziness or fainting



4) Share this information with anyone who covers you during breaks.

If a child has a severe allergy, knowing the signs of allergy can save the child's life. In those cases, it is important to **act fast!**

What about preventing food allergies in infants?



Doctors used to tell parents to wait to give highly allergenic foods (like peanuts and dairy products) until age 1 to prevent food allergies. Doctors now think that waiting on those foods does not help with allergies. Here are the new recommendations from allergy doctors:

- “Solid foods should be introduced gradually between four and six months of age. **Egg, dairy, peanut, tree nuts, fish and shellfish can be gradually introduced** after less allergenic foods have been tolerated. In fact, delaying the introduction of these foods may increase your baby’s risk of developing allergies” (2)
- Doctors also recommend waiting until about 6 months to start feeding solids. Encourage parents to wait until a child shows all the signs of readiness for solids before giving their baby solid foods (3).

How do we follow CACFP rules if a child can’t have a certain food item?

If a child can’t have a certain food item required by CACFP, then it is important to have a signed doctor's note verifying that the child must have a replacement. When making meal replacements, try to keep the meal similar to the one other children are served. For example:

- If a child can’t have cheese and the menu is pizza - try a pizza without cheese. Put sauce and meat toppings similar to the other childrens’. Or buy a dairy free cheese to use.
- If a child can’t have gluten and the menu item has bread, purchase gluten free bread for the child and keep it in the freezer to prevent food waste.



References

1. ALLERGY STATISTICS. AAAAI <https://www.aaaai.org/about-aaaai/newsroom/allergy-statistics>
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3. INFANT FOOD AND FEEDING. <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/HALF-Implementation-Guide/Age-Specific-Content/Pages/Infant-Food-and-Feeding.aspx/>