



Food Allergy Tips for Coaches and Activity Leaders

Food allergies and other causes of anaphylaxis are increasingly common and can be life threatening. Food allergies must be managed at all times and in all circumstances. Children with food allergies can safely participate in extracurricular and sports activities as long as we do certain things to prevent allergic reactions and be prepared for allergic emergencies.

FOOD ALLERGY FACTS

- 1 in 13 children in America has a food allergy (about 2 kids in every classroom)
- Food allergies can be life-threatening and need to be taken seriously
- Strict avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction
- Children can be allergic to any food, but 90% of children are allergic to one or more of the following foods: milk, egg, peanut, tree nut, fish, shellfish, wheat and soy
- 35% of children with food allergies have been bullied due to their allergy
- Outside foods are a common cause of allergic reactions in the classroom
- The majority of allergic reactions occur in the classroom

General Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Management Strategies

- Learn how to prevent accidental exposures (know how to read ingredient labels, common sources of hidden ingredients, and how to prevent cross-contact).
- Learn how to recognize an allergic reaction.
- Know how and when to use the child's epinephrine auto-injector if children are dropped off and left in your care.
- When possible do not allow food. If food is necessary, only serve food that is safe for everyone involved. This reduces the risk of a reaction and also ensures that the child can safely participate.
- If you are not comfortable accepting responsibility for reading labels ask the parents or the child (depending on age) to read the labels of any items being used for an activity. Allergens can be present in craft supplies, soaps, lotions, etc...
- Avoid using recycled food containers for activities or games. Trace amounts of the foods can remain in the containers and can cause reactions.
- Lead by example, support the child and act as a positive role model for all the children.

Management Strategies for Individual Participants

- At registration ask if there are any children with medical conditions (including food allergies). Remember to keep all medical information confidential.
- For those with medical conditions, partner with the families and discuss methods to allow them to participate safely.
- Be familiar with and have the anaphylaxis emergency care plan available.
- Let the child know that he or she is safe with you. The emotional impact of having a serious medical condition can be profound.

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