



# Food Allergy & School Nutrition

## Protecting the Lives and Health of Children Served



***“When it comes to your child’s food allergy, you can support the success of the school nutrition staff at your child’s school and create peace of mind for yourself with early and frequent communication.”***

In school kitchens across America, school nutrition professionals read and re-read literally hundreds of food labels. They practice and implement cross-contact prevention strategies as they prepare thousands of meals every day. They wash hands and change gloves between every new task. They check and recheck lists of students with noted food allergies and other medical conditions. Armed with knowledge, they battle everyday to protect the lives and health of the children they serve. School nutrition people know you are depending on them.

You can support the success of the school nutrition staff at your child’s school and create peace of mind for yourself with early and frequent communication about your child’s food allergy, or other medical condition.

### QUICK FOOD ALLERGY AVOIDANCE FACTS

- Oral ingestion is the most common and serious form of exposure.
- Exposure to small amounts of allergen is enough to result in anaphylaxis.
- Prior to serving a food, someone must read labels to completely avoid allergen. Staff should be familiar with current labeling laws.
- Ingredients can change without notification.
- Avoid foods that contain advisory statements for the food allergen unless otherwise specified by the healthcare provider.
- Cross contact is the presence of unintended food allergen and can occur from contact with surfaces, other foods, and with transfer of saliva.
- Allergens can withstand heating and drying.
- Establish a standardized cleaning protocol—this is essential to avoid cross contact.

### We All Share a Common Goal

School nutrition professionals throughout the nation share the same goal you have – to keep your child safe while eating at school. Please help them accomplish this extremely important task by communicating directly with the school nutrition manager in your child’s school or with the district’s school nutrition director. Early and frequent communication strengthens their resolve to protect the lives of the children served in school nutrition. Arm them with knowledge and details... and those lunch ladies (and men) will take care of your child as if he/she was their own!

### Tips to Ensure School Nutrition Staff Become Your Strongest Allies:

- **Inform the school nutrition department** of your child’s food allergy *before* your child starts school.
- **Obtain required documentation** for meal accommodations specific for your school district. Have your child’s physician sign necessary forms.
- **Provide written permission** to the physician’s office for the school nutrition department and nurse to discuss your child’s food allergy should questions arise.
- **Provide a list and discuss with the child nutrition manager** what safe foods your child likes and doesn’t like to eat. If available and affordable, they will make every attempt to provide foods your child likes and can safely eat while dining in the school cafeteria.
- **Obtain documentation for any changes** in meal accommodations and provide a copy to the school nutrition department as soon as possible.
- **Supply the school with current phone numbers** to contact you with questions or in case of an emergency.
- **Partner with your school nurse** or designee and keep updated auto-injectors and emergency care plans as appropriate.

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