

Food Allergy Guidelines

The administration and staff of the Waldwick Elementary Public Schools recognize the growing number of students with potentially life threatening food allergies. As a district, we are committed to the safety of all our students. As school nurses, we recognize the responsibility to develop appropriate food allergy plans that detail emergency management and address conditions to prevent exposure to specific allergens. It is our belief that a collaborative partnership between school and family is the best way to achieve this goal while thoughtfully increasing the student's independence.

These guidelines are intended to address the specific needs of food allergic students and the creation of a safe environment for all students. Although the medical and health related needs for each student are unique, the goal of these guidelines is to establish consistent practices throughout our elementary schools. It is important to note that the implementation of these guidelines will be considered in light of the developmental level of the students and may be modified to meet individual needs.

A collaborative relationship within the entire school community can provide a safe and healthy learning environment. As a result, parents and their children with food allergies will be able to make the transition between the safety of their home environment into the expanding world of school. When done well, this is one of the greatest lessons that a child with food allergies can learn. At the same time, classmates without food allergies can develop greater understanding of individual differences along with the capacity for flexibility and increased compassion.

The following are some interesting facts concerning food allergies:

- Eight foods account for 90% of allergic reactions. These include milk, eggs, peanuts, wheat, soy, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish.
- Symptoms of a reaction can include: a tingling sensation in the mouth; swelling of the lips, tongue, and throat; breathing difficulties; hives; vomiting; abdominal cramps; diarrhea, drop in blood pressure; loss of consciousness; and death. Symptoms can appear within seconds to hours after consuming the food to which one is allergic.
- Strict avoidance of allergy-causing foods is the only way to prevent a reaction. Reading the ingredient labels of all foods to be consumed and knowing the alternative names for allergens (such as "whey" and "casein" for milk) as well as preventing cross contamination are the keys to minimizing allergic reactions.
- Food allergies are different from food intolerances. Intolerance is a metabolic disorder and does not involve the immune system. A food allergy occurs when the immune system reacts to food protein causing symptoms that can affect the respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract, skin, and/or cardiovascular system.

Guidelines

1. For celebrations, the “sweet snack” will be Munchkins. Plain pretzels and plain potato chips with salt are permitted at the 4 class parties throughout the year. Parents are to provide their child with their own water bottle.
2. All parents of students with food allergies are encouraged to send in a “Safe Snack Box” for their child. These will be served during the 4 class parties, and monthly birthday munchkins, if the parent has chosen that their child is not given permission to have munchkins.
3. Students are not allowed to share or swap food.
4. An “Allergen-free Table” in our Lunch Room is available if parents choose to have their children eat there.
5. Additional interventions may be implemented to meet individual student needs.

Field Trips

1. A school nurse or district-trained epinephrine delegate will be sent on school sponsored field trips for those students with Epi-pens.
2. In an effort to promote the health and safety of all students, eating on the bus will not be allowed.
3. The appropriateness of all field trips will be evaluated in consideration of the needs of all students. For example, a trip to a dairy farm would not be scheduled for a class with a milk-allergic student.

References and Resources

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

American Academy of Pediatrics

American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology

Food Allergy Research and Education: FARE

National Association of School Nurses,

National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease

New Jersey State Department of Education