



LITCHFIELD ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Litchfield Elementary School District #79

Food & Nutrition Department

Special Dietary Needs & Accommodations

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Nutrition Overview

The Litchfield Elementary School District (LESD) Food & Nutrition Department (F&N) strives to offer healthy, well-balanced meals that are required to meet the strict nutritional guidelines and standards for the National School Breakfast and Lunch programs governed by the USDA. Students must select a minimum of at least three (3) components from the five (5) offered components to comprise a reimbursable lunch; meat/protein, whole grain, milk, fruit, and vegetable. At breakfast, students must select three (3) out of the five (5) components. At both breakfast and lunch, one of the components selected by students must be either a fruit or a vegetable.

1. Who is eligible to receive a special diet accommodation?

The LESD F&N Department is dedicated to meeting the nutritional needs of its students, including students with documented medical conditions. USDA regulations require that substitutions or modifications be made in school meals for children whose medical conditions restrict their diets when that need is certified by a State Licensed Healthcare Professional. The State Licensed Healthcare Professional who completes the "Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations" Form needs to indicate how the child's medical condition affects their diet and the substitutions or accommodations needed.

The LESD F&N Department may make food substitutions, at their discretion, for individual children who are medically certified as having a special medical or dietary need. The LESD F&N Department will try to accommodate any reasonable request for students with a medical need. However, schools are not required to serve special meals to all children with diet restrictions (i.e. most food allergies/intolerances such as wheat, citrus, egg, corn, etc.). Such determinations regarding dietary modifications will be made on a case-by-case basis by the LESD F&N Nutritionist/Director. A "Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations" Form is only needed when the menu needs to be modified or substituted and the student is planning on eating school meals. A form does not need to be completed if the student is not planning on eating school meals.

Families wanting to manage diabetes, food allergies, etc., without submitting a "Medical Statement" Form, may view information regarding nutrition, carbohydrate content, and major food allergies by viewing the district's web based menu provided through the TITAN Family Portal at <https://www.family.titank12.com> and is available on the district's website www.lesd79.org. However, substitutions and/or modifications cannot be made to the menu if a special diet form is on not file at the Food & Nutrition Office.

2. The doctor states that my child is allergic to something but he/she eats it at home. Do I have to get the form completed?

It is your choice whether or not to have the “Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations” Form completed. However, once this form is approved with the district’s nutritionist, we must follow the orders provided by the State Licensed Healthcare Professional to the full extent until they indicate otherwise.

3. Can I complete the form without having a State Licensed Healthcare Professional complete and sign the form?

No. In order for meal substitutions or modifications to be made, there must be a medical reason documented by a State Licensed Healthcare Professional. There are 2 sections on the “Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations” Form that must be completed. Part I is to be completed by the parent or guardian. Part II is to be completed and signed by a State Licensed Healthcare Professional. Any forms not completed and signed by a State Licensed Healthcare Professional will not be processed and will be returned to the parent or guardian.

4. Where can I find the “Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations” Form?

A current “Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations” Form is available on the district’s website under the Departments Tab → Food Services → Special Dietary Requests. Parents/legal guardians can also obtain a copy from the cafeteria cashier or nurse at your child’s school or by contacting the F&N department by phone or email. (623) 535-6060 or FOOD-NUTRITION@LESD.K12.AZ.US

5. Where do I submit the completed “Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations” Form?

Submit this form to the LESD F&N Department by:

- Mail: Litchfield Elementary School District #79 Food and Nutrition Department, 18921 West Thomas Road, Litchfield Park, Arizona 85340
- Fax: (623) 935 – 3398
- Email: FOOD-NUTRITION@LESD.K12.AZ.US

Please do not submit this form to the school nurse or the district office, as doing so will delay the processing of your request.

6. How often do I need to have this form completed?

It is not necessary to provide a new form every school year so long as there are no dietary updates or changes. It is necessary to provide a new form if the State Licensed Healthcare Professional marks the “This diet order is Temporary” box on the “Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations” Form as the diet order will expire as was written by the State Licensed Healthcare Professional.

7. How will I know that Litchfield Elementary School District Food & Nutrition Department will make the requested accommodation?

The district's Nutritionist will contact you with the final decision before the student can begin receiving modified meals.

8. How long does it take for a special diet to get started?

Once the LESD F&N Department has a completed "Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations" Form on file, it can take 10-15 business days for a diet to become available at the child's school site. This gives the F&N Department's Nutritionist time to modify menus that meet the child's needs, ensure that the appropriate foods are available, and instruct kitchen managers & staff in regards to each special diet. Parents are encouraged to review with their child appropriate food choices on the approved special diet menu. Furthermore, once appropriate menu/food choices have been determined, the district's Nutritionist will place an 'alert' on the student's meal account and the appropriate menu will be followed.

9. How will I know what is on my child's menu?

Menus are created in the F&N Department Office and are shared with the kitchen manager at your child's school site and information sent to the email address provided on the form by the parent/legal guardian. The kitchen manager then works with each parent to determine how often the menu items will be reviewed (it is preferred that the special menu is reviewed each month with the cafeteria). It is important that you provide a phone number and a working email address to facilitate communication with the kitchen manager and the F&N Department Office.

10. Will the district's Nutritionist determine how much of a nutrient my child should have (i.e. carbohydrates, sodium, fat, etc.)?

No. The State Licensed Healthcare Professional completing the "Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations" Form must include the specific diet information that your child needs to follow for school meals.

11. What steps do I need to take if a change is needed to my child's current special diet accommodation request?

A new "Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations" Form is required to make any changes to a student's current diet order. Special Dietary Accommodations can be cancelled by parents in writing, which could include an email to the district's Nutritionist. Any modifications to the diet order must come from a State Licensed Healthcare Professional. Once a special diet order is cancelled by a parent, a new "Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations" Form, completed and signed by a State Licensed Healthcare Professional, will be required before the diet can be reinstated.

12. How do I advise the cafeteria when my child plans to bring his/her lunch or is not going to be at school?

Special diets often come with added time, effort, and costs to the district. It is important for parents to communicate with the kitchen manager. Parents can call and/or email the kitchen manager directly prior to breakfast and lunch meal service. Calling in an absence to the school front office is not sufficient as the office does not advise the kitchen of absences.

13. What types of milk substitutions are provided for students?

We can accommodate medical conditions that require the avoidance of dairy; we offer the Pearl “Smart” Soy Milk by Kikkoman. A Special Dietary Accommodations Form is required for the substitution of the milk requirement. However, students are not required to take milk as part of their meal. Therefore, those students who need to avoid dairy can simply decline the milk portion of their meal while still choosing three items from the fruit, vegetable, grain, and meat/meat alternate groups. Students have access to water (drinking fountain or cup) every day in the cafeteria to drink with their meals. Water bottles will not be an available substitute for milk. According to USDA regulations, juice is not a nutritionally equivalent beverage for milk and therefore cannot be provided as a substituted in a meal.

14. Can I bring special diet food items to school and store them in the school cafeteria?

We cannot store outside food in the kitchen. There are many factors that affect this including food storage space, food safety, and cross-contamination issues.

15. Are substitutions for religious or personal preferences (i.e. vegetarian/vegan) offered?

No. It must be a medically necessary reason. We do offer multiple choices daily, with at least one vegetarian option (Un crustable PBJ or Salad Bar), to allow students with religious and other personal preferences opportunities to eat with us, but we do not monitor his/her choices.

16. My child is “Gluten Free” or has Celiac or Gluten Intolerance what steps do I need to do in order for them to have a “Gluten Free” menu?

The first step you would need to take is to complete the “Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations” Form and have it completed and signed by a State Licensed Healthcare Professional. Once the request is returned and approved by the F&N Department, you will be notified of your approval. You can then print off the Breakfast/Lunch menus from our web-based menu located at <https://family.titank12.com> or on our district website www.lesd79.org and circle the meals/days that your child will eat in the cafeteria. You will then need to submit those menus to the cafeteria at the beginning of the month for them to prepare the items you have indicated. The cafeteria will then make only those items on the days you indicated for your child. The “Gluten Free” items are highly perishable and costly for the district, and as such we do not routinely keep or make these items up in advance unless there is a need at that school.

17. Are any Litchfield Elementary School District schools peanut or nut free?

No. While it is not possible to guarantee a “peanut-free” or “nut-free” school, designating areas in the cafeteria “peanut safe” or “nut safe” is reasonable and appropriate. Please keep in mind there are no restrictions on the products other students can bring in their lunches from home and LESD is not responsible for ensuring lunches brought from home are peanut free.

We do offer peanut butter and jelly sandwiches (Uncrustable) at all sites in the cafeterias. They are premade at a commercial facility and individually wrapped. Please be aware that this does not guarantee an allergen-free or nut-free school.

PLEASE NOTE: LESD does not currently have a policy regarding allergens in the school or lunch room, nor can we guarantee an allergen-free kitchen. If your child has a severe allergy, it is important to communicate with his/her school (Kitchen Manager, Nurse, and appropriate school staff).

For questions about the “Medical Statement for Special Dietary Accommodations” Form or special diets in general, please contact the Food & Nutrition Coordinator, Timothy Ely at ely@lesd.k12.az.us or (623) 547-1556 or the Food & Nutrition Director, Chef, Ronald L Beck II, BS, SNS at beckr@lesd.k12.az.us or (623) 535-6060.