

Flagler County School Cafeteria Food Allergy Guidelines



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Dictionary

Allergen: A substance that causes an allergic reaction

Allergic reaction: An immune system response to a substance-in the case of food allergies, the proteins from allergenic foods- that the body mistakenly interprets as harmful

Anaphylaxis: A severe allergic reaction that occurs rapidly and may cause death

Celiac disease: An autoimmune disease that results in damage to the small intestine and interferes with the body's ability to absorb nutrients from food. Students with celiac disease cannot tolerate gluten, a protein found in wheat, rye, barley, and oats

Cross-contact: The transfer of an allergen from a food or surface containing an allergen to a food or surface that does not contain the allergen

Cross-contamination: occurs when microorganisms are transferred from one food or surface to another

Epinephrine: another name for adrenaline. It is a common medicine for controlling severe or anaphylactic reactions

Food allergy: The system's reaction to a certain food. The immune system mistakenly considers the food to be harmful and creates antibodies to that food. When the food is eaten again, the immune system releases histamine and other chemicals, causing the symptoms of an allergic reaction

Histamine: One of the several chemicals released by the body during an allergic reaction. It is the cause of many of the symptoms of an allergic reaction

Lactose intolerance: A reaction to a food that does not involve the immune system. Lactose-intolerance people lack an enzyme that is needed to digest milk sugar. When they eat milk products, symptoms such as gas, bloating, and abdominal pain may occur. Lactose intolerance is more common in adults than in young children

Food Allergy Overview

- What is a food allergy?
 - A food allergy is the reaction a student's immune system has to a certain food.
- What is a food allergen?
 - A food allergen is the protein that causes the reaction.
- What kind of symptoms do food allergens cause?
 - Food allergens can cause mild symptoms (rash, hives, itching, swelling) or severe symptoms (trouble breathing, wheezing, or loss of consciousness).
- When does an allergic reaction occur?
 - An allergic reaction occurs when the immune system mistakenly attacks a food protein that has been eaten. The attack by the immune system may trigger chemicals, resulting in symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- What are the most common food allergens?
 - The Big 8 are eight food items that account for 90% of allergic reactions.
 - The Big 8 include milk, eggs, soybeans, fish, tree nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans), peanuts, crustacean shellfish (crab, shrimp), and wheat.
 - Note: Students can be allergic to virtually any food, not just the Big 8!
- What is the difference between a food intolerance and food allergy?
 - A food intolerance, such as lactose intolerance, can cause a student to feel sick. It occurs because the body cannot properly digest the food that is eaten. It may cause nausea, gas, cramps, abdominal pain, diarrhea, irritability, or headaches.
 - A food allergy can cause a student to feel ill, but it can also cause anaphylaxis, a life-threatening reaction. It occurs because the body's immune system sees the allergen as an invader, and tries to fight it by releasing chemicals into the body. Someone with a food allergy can have a life-threatening reaction by eating, or sometimes even touching or inhaling the allergen. Students with food allergies must avoid the food allergen entirely.

Difference Between Cross-contact and Cross-contamination

Cross-contact

- Cross-contact is the transfer of an allergen from a food or surface containing an allergen to a food or surface that does not contain the allergen.
- Cross-contact can occur directly (milk accidentally spills in the refrigerator and comes into contact with other foods) or indirectly (picking up a nut-containing muffin and setting it down, then picking up a nut-free muffin).
- Tiny amounts of allergen cross-contact can cause an allergic reaction.
- Do not let food containing an allergen come into contact with other foods.
- Note: No amount of cooking can make food safe if cross-contact occurred (i.e. you cannot cook out the allergen!).

Cross-contamination

- Cross-contamination is the transfer of disease-causing organisms from one surface to another.
- Cross-contamination occurs when juices from raw meats or germs from dirty objects touch cooked or ready-to-eat foods.

Review Sources of Cross-Contact (page 8) and Prevent Cross-Contact handouts (page 9)

Guidelines

- **Communication**
 - Keeping students safe begins before they step into the cafeteria.
 - Communicate with food service staff, school nurses, teachers, parents, and students to safely accommodate students with special needs.
- **Storage**
 - Store allergen-free products away from other products.
 - Designate shelves in dry storage, coolers, and freezers for allergen-free foods to prevent cross-contact.
 - Clean allergen-free storage areas regularly.
- **Clean Surfaces (work stations, prep tables, serving lines, countertops)**
 - Allergens may be present on surfaces, even if you can't see them.
 - Cleaning is critical to remove allergens from surfaces.
 - Use paper towels and spray cleaners to wash, rinse, and sanitize surfaces.
 - 1. Scrape or remove food bits from the surface.
 - 2. Wash the surface with an approved cleaner and paper towels.
 - 3. Rinse the surface with clean water.
 - 4. Sanitize the surface with the correct sanitizing solution.
 - 5. Allow the surface to air-dry.
 - Note: If using cloth towels and buckets, use clean towels and buckets of cleaner, water, or sanitizer, because allergens may be present in used towels and buckets.
- **Personal Hygiene**
 - When it is time to prepare an allergen-free meal, remove your apron and put a new apron on. Allergens can get on aprons and be a source of cross-contact.
 - Wash your hands and use disposable paper towels to dry your hands.
 - Review *How to Wash Hands* handout (page 10).
- **Check Ingredient Labels Regularly**
 - Check ingredient labels regularly to determine if foods you are using to prepare special meals contain allergens. Check often because manufacturers may change ingredients without notifying buyers.
 - Review *Alternate Names Used in Ingredient Labels for the Big Eight Allergens* handout (pages 11-12).
- **Equipment**

- Since a separate kitchen can't be used to prepare meals for students with food allergies, it is important to clean and sanitize shared equipment.
- Use clean pots, pans, mixing bowls, and utensils when preparing allergen-free meals.
 - A best practice is to keep a separate set of cooking utensils for allergen-free meal preparation to avoid cross-contact.
- If equipment can't be cleaned properly (e.g. toaster), use separate equipment for allergen-free meal preparation. This may require a new toaster to be purchased.
- If new equipment can't be purchased, create a physical barrier (e.g. place food on a clean baking sheet in the oven or place a piece of foil on the grill to cook allergen-free meals).
- After using designated allergen-free equipment, clean it properly, then store it in a separate area of the kitchen.
- Put on a clean pair of gloves.
- **Serving Lines**
 - Place allergen-containing foods away from allergen-free foods to minimize the risk of cross-contact.
 - Use different utensils for different foods.
 - Clean utensils and surfaces regularly.
- **Plating a Special Diet Plates**
 - Identify allergen-free lunches from other lunches by one of these methods:
 - Placing meal in a covered container (i.e. to-go box).
 - Using a sticker identifying which allergen the meal is free of.
 - Using a different type of plate.
 - After the meal has been plated, double check the meal to make sure it does not contain the allergen. If it does contain the allergen, throw the entire meal away and start over. Do not try to remove the allergen from the plate (e.g. scrape cheese off of a cheeseburger), because small amounts of the allergen are still present, and can cause an allergic reaction.