

Life-Threatening Food Allergies: Information for Families

At Darien Public Schools (DPS), the health and safety of our students is our highest priority. We are committed to the prevention and careful management of life-threatening food allergies (LTFA) and work in close partnership with families, health care providers, school nurses, DPS staff, and Dining Services to ensure every student learns in a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment. Below, please find all the information you might need to help us support your child.

My Child Has a Life-Threatening Food Allergy. What Do I Need to Do?

DPS follows a clear, step-by-step process to ensure students with life-threatening food allergies are safely supported at school.

Step 1. Notify the School Nurse. Please inform the school nurse at your child's school of your child's food allergy. For returning students, notification is only required if there has been a change in allergy status.

Step 2. Submit Required Forms and Medications. At the start of each school year, or sooner if indicated, families must submit:

- [Emergency Care Plan for Food Allergy](#)
- [Medication Authorization Form\(s\)](#)
- All prescribed rescue medications (as listed on the emergency care plan)

NOTE: Before leaving your medical provider's office, please carefully review forms to ensure that allergens are listed correctly, rescue medications and dosages are accurate and match pharmacy labels, required signatures are completed (healthcare provider and parent/guardian), AND medication orders are dated and cover the school year. All medication must be picked up at the end of the school year.

Step 3. Review and sign your child's Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP). Once the required documentation and medications are received, the school nurse will provide parents/guardians with an Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP) to review and sign. The IHCP outlines the steps the school will take to manage your child's allergy and support a safe learning environment. Families are asked to review, sign, and return the IHCP.

Step 4. Attend or opt out of your child's annual Section 504 Meeting. Families receive written notice each school year regarding the annual review. Parents/guardians are invited to participate in the meeting; attendance is encouraged but not required. Following the annual review, the updated 504, along with the IHCP, is uploaded to CT-SEDS for family review.

Frequently Asked Questions

Every effort is made to provide the safest possible environment for students with life-threatening food allergies. Below, please find answers to some of our most frequently asked questions. If you have any additional questions or concerns at any time, please contact the school nurse at your child's school. We are always happy to support you and your child.

What is the difference between the required forms?

Emergency Care Plan for Food Allergy: This form outlines the emergency actions to take if your child experiences an anaphylactic reaction. The care plan includes clear, step-by-step instructions, such as observing the child for signs and symptoms of a reaction, administering epinephrine as prescribed (EpiPen Jr. 0.15 mg IM or EpiPen 0.3 mg IM), and calling 911 to transport the student by EMS to the hospital Emergency Department.

Medication Authorization Form: This form authorizes school nurses, or in the absence of a school nurse, designated trained staff, to administer prescription or over-the-counter medications during the school day. Most emergency care plans require two medication authorization forms: one for epinephrine (e.g., EpiPen) and one for an antihistamine (e.g., Benadryl).

IMPORTANT: Before leaving your health care provider's office, please review all forms to ensure that allergens are listed correctly; rescue medications and dosages are accurate and match the pharmacy labels; all required signatures (health care provider and parent/guardian) are completed; and medication orders are dated to cover the full school year. School nurses cannot accept incomplete, expired, or inconsistent forms. All documentation must match across the Emergency Care Plan, Medication Authorization Form(s), and medication labels.

What do I need to know before dropping off my child's rescue medications?

All medications must be provided in original, properly labeled pharmacy containers and accompanied by the required medication authorization forms. Labels must include the student's name, medication name, and the authorized prescriber's name. Over-the-counter medications (e.g., antihistamines) must be unopened and properly labeled, and *all medications must be delivered to school by a responsible adult*

Can my child self-carry or self-administer their medication?

Self-carrying and/or self-administration of emergency medication (such as epinephrine) may be permitted for students who demonstrate the knowledge, skill, and maturity to do so safely. This determination is made on an individual basis by the school nurse in collaboration with the family and health care provider and is documented on the medication authorization form(s). Students approved to self-carry are expected to carry medications and orders on their persons throughout the school day.

Why does my child need a 504 plan to support their LTFA?

LTFA's are considered a significant health condition and are protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, a federal civil rights law that prevents discrimination for students with

disabilities in programs receiving federal funding. Students with LTFA's qualify for a Section 504 Accommodation Plan, which is reviewed annually or more frequently if needed.

Who is trained in the school to recognize and/or administer rescue medications?

School nurses provide annual training for staff on recognizing allergic reactions and responding in an emergency. In the absence of a school nurse, trained staff may be delegated to administer medications and support students with LTFA throughout the school day, during school-sponsored activities, and on field trips

What if my child no longer has LTFA(s)?

If your child no longer has a life-threatening food allergy, please notify the school nurse and provide confirming documentation from your child's health care provider. The school nurse will update your child's Emergency Care Plan, Medication Authorization Forms, IHCP, and 504 Accommodation Plan as needed to ensure all records accurately reflect this change.

What actions are taken to ensure my child with an LTFA can safely participate in school-day field trips?

DPS takes careful steps to ensure students with LTFA's can safely participate in school-day field trips. Before each trip, the school nurse reviews the student's allergy, Emergency Care Plan, and required medications with designated staff (usually the classroom teacher or chaperone). Designated staff carry emergency medications and are prepared to respond, as designated on the Emergency Care plan. Food-related activities are reviewed in advance, and precautions are taken to minimize allergen exposure while supporting full participation.

What about bus transportation to and from school?

Bus drivers receive annual training to recognize anaphylactic reactions and respond to medical emergencies. This usually includes safely pulling the bus over and calling 911. Food is not allowed on buses. While in most cases, your child's emergency medications are not on the bus, they are available upon arrival and dismissal. If our child requires additional support, please contact your school nurse to develop an individualized transportation plan.

My child participates in before- or after-school activities. What should I know?

School nurses are not available before or after regular school hours, and emergency medications are not accessible outside the school day. If your child has a life-threatening food allergy and will be participating in a Board of Education interscholastic athletic event or other school-sponsored activity outside regular hours, please contact the school nurse in advance. This allows time to coordinate appropriate accommodations and create an individual medication plan.

How can I be sure cafeteria food is safe for my child?

Darien Public Schools has safeguards to help students with LTFA's safely access school meals. DPS contracts with Chartwells, whose staff are trained in food allergen management by Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE).

- *Elementary Schools: All food items served in our elementary school cafeterias are nut-free, and any packaged products provided are sourced from facilities that do not process nuts.*
- *Middlesex Middle School: All food items prepared and served in the MMS cafeteria are nut-free. However, some packaged products, such as rolls and baked goods, are nut-free but may be produced in facilities that also process nuts and seeds. These items are clearly labeled to help students and staff make informed choices.*
- *Darien High School: All prepared food items served in the DHS cafeteria are nut-free. However, some packaged products, particularly baked goods, may contain nuts or be produced in facilities that also process nuts and seeds. These products are clearly labeled to help students and staff make informed choices.*

Information about a student's known food allergies or sensitivities is entered into Mosaic, the district's point-of-sale system. If a student attempts to purchase a food item containing a known allergen, dining staff receive an alert, and the student is informed and encouraged to choose a safe alternative. Families are encouraged to review allergen information on the [DPS Dining Services website](#). For questions or concerns about menu items, please contact Meghan Bendish, Director of Dining Services (mbendish@darienps.org), or your child's school kitchen manager.

Helpful Links

- [DPS Health Services Website](#)
- [Letter to Parents of Students with LTFA](#)
- [Emergency Care Plan for LTFA](#)
- [DPS Medication Authorization Form](#)
- [Elementary School Letter from Nursing and Dining Services](#)
- [MMS Letter from Nursing and Dining Services](#)
- [Darien High School Letter from Nursing and Dining Services](#)