

Children and food allergies

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Food allergies are on the rise in the United States. More than 12 million Americans have food allergies. The rate of food allergies is highest in young children under age 3. Each year hundreds of individuals die from food allergies. Over 30,000 people receive life-saving treatment in emergency rooms.

Any food can cause allergies. Ninety per cent of all food allergic reactions are caused by eight major food allergens: shellfish, milk, egg, soy, wheat, fish, peanut and tree nuts.

According to Dina Clifford, of Beyond a Peanut, children with food allergies must rely on parents, caregivers and friends to help keep them stay safe. An easy guideline is to ask anyone who is involved with children if they ARE prepared.

- A** Avoidance of the Allergen
- R** Recognize a Reaction in children
- E** Emergency plans and Epinephrine available

Avoidance. Read food labels every time a food is purchased or served. Manufacturers can change ingredients. The same food can be manufactured in different facilities that are not allergen free. Avoidance may be more



challenging than one might think.

Cross-contamination. For example, a cookie sheet or bowl may have been used to make peanut butter cookies. Now the bowl is being used to make sugar cookies for a child with a peanut allergy.

A child with an allergy may react to a food without eating it. The child might have a reaction if they touch the food or surfaces that have been in contact with the food, like a dirty table. A child may also react from inhaling particles of the food that may be in the air of a room.

Recognize a Reaction - Symptoms typically appear within 2 minutes to 2 hours. Signs of an allergic reaction include:

- Tingling sensation in the mouth “My tongue is itchy”, “My mouth feels funny”
- Hives “I feel itchy”
- Swelling of the tongue and throat “Something is stuck in my throat”
- Abdominal cramps “I have a bad tummy ache”
- Difficulty breathing
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Drop in blood pressure, loss of consciousness, and potentially death

Emergency plans - It is important that parents work with their child’s doctors and are trained for emergencies. Parents need to train caretakers and family members to recognize and treat an allergic reaction. Antihistamines such as Benadryl are sometimes used to treat an allergic reaction.

Epinephrine is a medication that can temporarily reverse an allergic reaction until emergency

medical treatment. Since these medications are only a temporary reverse, it is important to call 911 if you have had to administer epinephrine to treat an allergic reaction.

Other children can help their friends with food allergies stay safe by learning to wash their hands well and not sharing food. Children who are educated about food allergies and allergic reactions can tell a teacher or adult right away if their friend is not feeling good or they see something that is wrong.

For information on understanding the Food Label or Cooking Allergen Free, contact your local Colorado State University Extension Agent. Locations are listed at www.ext.colostate.edu.

For more information on food allergies visit the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network website at www.foodallergy.org. They have a site just for kids at www.faankids.org. For training and educational materials visit Beyond a Peanut at www.beyondapeanut.com.

Healthy kids – Boost fruits and vegetables in your child’s diet

Fruits and vegetables are full of vitamins, minerals and fiber. These are essential to keeping your child healthy. Most kids need about 2 to 4 cups of fruits and vegetables every day. The older they are, the more they need!

Here are some easy ways to get your kids to eat more fruits and vegetables.

- Keep it colorful. Challenge your child to “Eat a Rainbow”.
- Add it on. Try adding fruits and vegetables

to food they already like. For example, add veggies on top of a pizza slice.

- Try Smoothies. Combine 100% fruit juice, low fat milk and/or yogurt and frozen fruit in a blender. Process until smooth.
- Camouflage them. Hide fruits and veggies by chopping up and mixing them in pasta sauces, lasagna, casseroles, soup, chili and omelets. Add fresh or frozen berries to pancakes, waffles or muffins.
- Fruit Pops. Put 100% fruit juice in an ice tray and freeze it overnight.
- Vegetable Dippers. Chop raw vegetables into bite-size pieces to use with low fat dip.
- Let them choose. Let the children make decisions at the supermarket. Involve them in helping you prepare dinner.
- Take the family and fruit alphabetical challenge. List fruits and vegetables in alphabetical order on a sheet of paper. Kids can check items off the list as they try them.

Active kids – Children and allergies

The holidays have passed, school has started again and it is the middle of winter. You might be thinking that it is too cold to play outside. The truth is you can have just as much fun outside in the winter!

With all of the snow and cold weather you will have to be prepared to play outside. Hats, gloves, boots and a warm winter coat are all very important when playing outside during this time of year. Making snowmen and snow angels, building igloos, and sledding are great activities to do with your family and friends.

If you do not want to play outside in the snow there are many other activities you can do inside

that are just as fun! Playing hide and go seek is a fun activity that gets you moving inside of the house. Get your siblings, your friends and even Mom and Dad together to play. It is a great activity that gets everyone involved!

The next time you feel like you have nothing to do in the winter time, you can take these activity ideas, and whether you are inside or outside, you can be sure you will have a ton of fun!

Information provided by America On the Move. Visit americaonthemove.org.



Thank you to Live Well Colorado for the support for the Spanish translation of Family Matters

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Colorado State University, U.S. Department of
Agriculture and Colorado counties cooperating.