

# Food Allergies 101: Back-to-School Safety

*This article was reviewed by Stuart A. Friedman, MD, FAAAAI*

Heading back to school is an exciting time for most students and parents. But for families of children with food allergies, it can also be a time of anxiety and fear.

For students with food allergies, potential dangers lurk throughout the school environment. Risks in the cafeteria are often obvious to parents, but students must also be careful when art projects, fieldtrips and class parties involve food.

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI) estimates that approximately 3 million school-age children suffer from food allergies. Yet school districts have differing policies on how to provide a safe environment for these children.

## Cooperation is key

Parents, school officials and teachers need to work together to create a safe environment for students with food allergies.

Make sure that school staff knows what foods are unsafe for your child. If necessary, give cafeteria workers a picture of your child and request they prepare allergy-free lunches for him or her.

Your doctor can provide you with information on preventing, recognizing and treating an allergic reaction. Pass these tips on to all school staff that interact with your child.

## Keeping healthy. Staying safe.

The AAAAI offers these tips for parents:

- Meet with your child's teacher and school nurse before the start of the school year to explain your child's food allergies.
- Get a doctor's note to allow your child to take emergency medication to school.
- Send safe snacks with your child for classroom parties. Or, ask the teacher to limit goodies to stickers, pencils and other non-food treats.



## DID YOU KNOW?

- Peanuts, eggs, milk, wheat, tree nuts and soy account for 90 percent of allergic reactions in children.
- Reactions to food allergies include hives, swelling, upset stomach or a severe, life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis.
- Approximately 3 million school-age children suffer from food allergies, yet each individual school district sets its own policies for dealing with food allergies.

## To the Point

Children frequently outgrow allergies to egg, milk and soy. However peanut, tree nut, fish and shellfish allergies are most often life-long.

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or to find an allergist/immunologist.*