



Nutrition Bits and Bites!

Food Allergies



What is an allergic reaction?

It is when the body reacts to a protein or irritant (allergen). It can start as a mild reaction and develop into a severe reaction in seconds. The reaction may be caused by food, insect stings, environment, and medications.

Food allergies are triggered when your body's immune system mistakenly identifies a food protein to be harmful. Exposure to even the smallest amounts of allergenic protein can cause a serious allergic reaction in sensitive individuals. This is why you need to be very careful when packing school lunches for your children.

What is cross-contamination (also known as cross-contact)?

These terms are used to describe the presence of an allergen that is transferred from one food or object to another. For example, cookies baked on the same tray as peanut butter cookies cause a risk of cross-contamination to someone with a peanut allergy.

Substitutes for School Lunches and Snacks

It is important to check with your student's classroom for a safe food list. The schools are not asking students to eliminate these foods from their diet. It is just asked that these high risk foods be consumed at home.

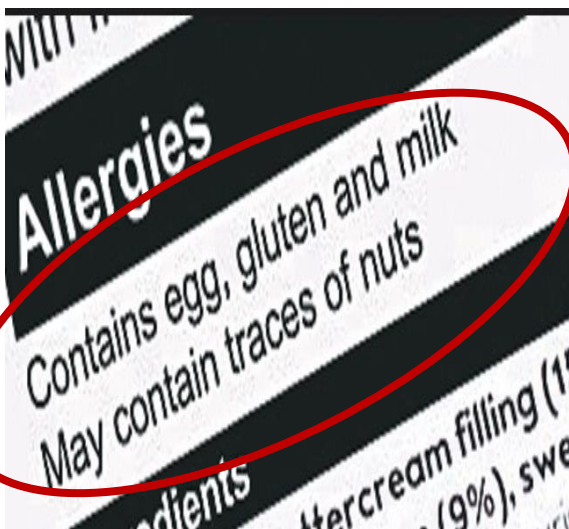
- Always read the ingredients section of the label to identify if the product is free of the allergen.
- Don't pack any food with ingredients that are restricted at your school.
- Remember, even trace amounts can cause a severe allergic reaction.

Check Food Labels for Priority Allergens

Parents and consumers should look for the allergen in the ingredient list. Parts of an ingredient like spices may be in brackets, or look for a "contains" statement after the ingredients, like "Contains: Milk, wheat, egg, peanut".

Make sure to double check the ingredient list before you buy or consume any product. Even if you have purchased or eaten it before, it is a good idea to check the label every time, in case manufacturing practices or ingredients have changed. If you are unsure about a food product, contact food manufacturers and ask!

For more information, check out this link from Food Allergy Canada:
<http://foodallergycanada.ca/allergy-safety/food-labelling/>



Debunking Myths

Myth: Food allergies to foods other than nuts are mild.

Fact: Practically any food can cause a reaction. Life threatening reactions can occur with milk, eggs, wheat and others.

Myth: Product recalls due to undeclared allergens do not happen in Canada.

Fact: Product recalls can occur in Canada. The Canadian Food & Inspection Agency monitors and alerts consumers when any of the [10 priority allergens](#) are not declared on a package. Stay in the loop on product recalls through Food Allergy Canada's registry <http://foodallergycanada.ca/programs-services/allergy-information-service/>.

Myth: Using hand sanitizer is a good way to clean your hands of food allergens.

Fact: Hand sanitizers decrease the amount of food allergens, but DO NOT completely remove food allergens. Soap and water and wet wipes do the trick. Hand sanitizers are helpful for preventing the flu and other infections.

Allergen Substitutions

Milk Products	<p>Cow's Milk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To replace cow's milk, use fortified milk alternatives such as soy, almond, coconut, cashew, hemp, oat, or rice. These can be substituted 1-for-1 in recipes. <p>NOTE: <i>Not all milk alternatives are nutritionally equal. Regular milk and fortified soy milk have comparable amounts of protein while other milk alternatives have limited amounts of protein per serving. Ensure the milk alternative you choose is fortified with calcium and vitamin D.</i></p> <p>Butter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use a dairy-free or vegan margarine. These can be substituted 1-for-1 in recipes. Try using a cooking oil such as canola, soybean or olive oil. If substituting oil for butter in baking, decrease the amount. For example, if a recipe calls for 1/2 cup butter, try using 1/3 cup oil instead. <p>Buttermilk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make your own buttermilk using 1 cup of fortified milk alternative such as soy milk, mixed with 1 tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice. <p>Sour Cream, Yogurt, and Cream Cheese</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try a soy-based or coconut-based sour cream, yogurt and cream cheese. Make your own sour cream using 4 tablespoons of starch (corn starch, rice starch, or potato starch) mixed with 3/4 cup water and 1/4 cup vinegar for each cup of sour cream required.
Eggs	<p>To replace 1 egg, try:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial egg replacements (e.g. Ener-G Egg Replacer- made from tapioca and potato starch) 1 tbsp ground flaxseed or ground chia seeds mixed with 3 tbsp of water (let stand for 1 minute) 1/4 cup (2 oz) tofu 1/4 cup pureed fruits such as banana (~ 1/2 ripe banana) or unsweetened apple sauce 2 tbsp arrowroot powder mixed with 3 tbsp water
Wheat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In place of wheat flour, combinations of alternate flours work better than a single flour alone. Rye, oat and barley flour produce a better product than rice, tapioca, and other grains because they contain gluten and have more fibre. People with a wheat allergy can usually tolerate rye, oat and barley flours while people with celiac disease who follow a gluten-free diet cannot.

For more information on nutrition and healthy eating, visit:

<https://www.southernhealth.ca/finding-care/health-info-for-you/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/>

To access previous school nutrition newsletters, visit:

<https://www.southernhealth.ca/whats-happening/nutritional-newsletters/>

Contact Dial-a-Dietitian 1-877-830-2892 Health Links 1-888-315-9257 Nutrition Services Team 1-204-856-2055

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