

## **Hillsdale Public Schools Food Allergy Guidelines**

The administration and staff of the Hillsdale Public Schools recognizes the growing number of students with potentially life threatening food allergies. As a district, we are committed to the safety of all our students. As school nurses, we recognize the responsibility to develop appropriate food allergy plans that detail emergency management and address conditions to prevent exposure to specific allergens. It is our belief that a collaborative partnership between school and family is the best way to achieve this goal while thoughtfully increasing the student's independence.

These guidelines are intended to address the specific needs of food allergic students and the creation of a safe environment for all students. Although the medical and health related needs for each student are unique, the goal of these guidelines is to establish consistent practices throughout the district. It is important to note that the implementation of these guidelines will be considered in light of the developmental level of the students and may be modified to meet individual needs.

A collaborative relationship within the entire school community can provide a safe and healthy learning environment. As a result, parents and their children with food allergies will be able to make the transition between the safety of their home environment into the expanding world of school. When done well, this is one of the greatest lessons that a child with food allergies can learn. At the same time, classmates without food allergies can develop a greater understanding of individual differences along with the capacity for flexibility and increased compassion.

The following are some interesting facts concerning food allergies:

- Approximately 327,000 New Jerseyans suffer from food allergies and nearly 100,000 of them are children.
- U.S. physicians are reporting an increase in the number of food-allergic patients. Over 6 million Americans have food allergies and the number of children with peanut allergies doubled in a 5 year period between 1997 and 2002.
- Eight foods account for 90% of allergic reactions. These include milk, eggs, peanuts, wheat, soy, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish.
- Symptoms of a reaction can include: a tingling sensation in the mouth; swelling of the lips, tongue, and throat; breathing difficulties; hives; vomiting; abdominal cramps; diarrhea; drop in blood pressure; loss of consciousness; and death. Symptoms can appear within seconds to hours after consuming the food to which one is allergic.

- Strict avoidance of allergy-causing foods is the only way to prevent a reaction. Reading the ingredient labels of all foods to be consumed and knowing the alternative names for allergens (such as “whey” and “casein” for milk) as well as preventing cross-contamination are the keys to minimizing allergic reactions.
- Food allergies are different from food intolerances. An intolerance is a metabolic disorder and does not involve the immune system. A food allergy occurs when the immune system reacts to a food protein causing symptoms that can affect the respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract, skin, and/or cardiovascular system.

## Classroom Interventions and Celebrations

All classrooms designated as “Peanut/Tree Nut Free” must observe the following guidelines:

1. All parents of students in Peanut/Tree Nut Free classrooms will be notified of the fact that there is at least 1 student in that particular class with a peanut/tree nut allergy.
2. For daily snacks, **please do not send in any product containing peanuts, tree nuts (almonds, pecans, walnuts, cashews, pistachios, etc.) or their oils.** Be sure to check all ingredient labels and also understand that products labeled as “may contain nuts” or “produced in a facility that processes nuts” are **not acceptable.**
3. We offer a Peanut/Tree Nut Free table to interested students with Peanut/Tree Nut allergies. If a student without such an allergy is invited to sit at this table, **he or she must have a peanut/tree nut free lunch.**
4. For classroom celebrations, such as birthdays and holiday parties, all food must be in its original container with the nutrition label intact. **All food must be brought to the nurse’s office for approval prior to entering the classroom.**
5. All parents of students with food allergies are encouraged to send in a supply of safe snacks for their children. These will be served when the classroom celebration treat is unsafe or when prohibited by the parents.
6. Students with food allergies **may not eat any homemade food items** from other homes.
7. Students with food allergies may eat food that has been approved by the nurse **only with prior parental permission. If there are any safety concerns whatsoever, the food will not be served** and the student will have one of the safe snacks that have been provided by his or her parent(s).
8. Students can have a variety of food allergies including dairy, egg, wheat, soy, sesame, fruit, vegetables, food coloring, etc. Although only peanuts and tree nuts are prohibited, **please remember that numerous factors are considered when assessing the safety of food before it enters a classroom and that is the reason for final approval by the nurse.**
9. Although foods may be approved by the nurse, please remember that **the final decision to serve the food to the food allergic student rests with his or her own parent(s).**
10. If parents or teachers choose to distribute goody bags, **they must contain non-edible items.**
11. Students are advised to **wash their hands** before and after consuming food.
12. Students are **not allowed to share or swap food.**
13. There are several days throughout the school year when students will eat their lunches in the classrooms (Election Day, Book Fair, etc.). Prior notice will be sent home with the students in Peanut/Tree Nut Free classrooms and also will be posted on the school website. **On these days, lunches brought to school must be free of peanuts, tree nuts, and their oils.**

14. Please remember that **all foods served in the school cafeteria are Peanut/Tree Nut Free.**
15. For some suggestions regarding safe foods, please consult [www.SnackSafely.com](http://www.SnackSafely.com).  
**Please note that these foods still require approval by the nurse since labeling changes are common.**
16. **All classroom activities, holiday projects, and Funtastics activities must use non-edible items.**

#### **General Nutritional Snack Guidelines:**

1. Snacks should contain **no more than 8 grams of total fat per serving and no more than 2 grams of saturated fat per serving.** Sugar cannot be the first ingredient.
2. All beverages **shall not exceed 12 oz**, except water or milk containing 2% or less fat.
3. Suggested snacks include: fruit, vegetables, pretzels, cheese & crackers, and yogurt.

### **Cafeteria Interventions**

1. All foods served in the school cafeteria are free of peanuts and tree nuts.
2. An allergen-free table will be an available option for all allergic students.
3. Students are not allowed to share or swap food.
4. Students are advised to wash their hands before and after consuming food.
5. If there is a need for a peanut/tree nut free table and a student without food allergies is invited to sit there, he or she must have a peanut/tree nut free lunch on that day.
6. Additional interventions may be implemented to meet individual student needs.

### **Field Trips**

1. A school nurse or trained delegate will be available during all school-sponsored field trips.
2. Parents of the food allergic students are encouraged, but not required, to accompany their children on field trips.
3. In an effort to promote the health and safety of all students, eating on the bus is strongly discouraged.
4. The appropriateness of all field trips will be evaluated in consideration of the needs of all students. For example, a trip to dairy farm would not be scheduled for a class with a milk-allergic student.

## References

American Academy of Pediatrics  
Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network  
National Association of School Nurses  
New Jersey State Department of Education  
New York State Department of Health

## Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)  
Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network, [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)  
National Association of School Nurses, [www.nasn.org](http://www.nasn.org)  
New Jersey State Department of Education, [www.state.nj.us](http://www.state.nj.us)  
[www.SnackSafely.com](http://www.SnackSafely.com)