



10 SCHOOL PLANNING TIPS

When Your Child Has Food Allergies



Most children with food allergies attend school safely every day. That safety is the result of planning and persistence. A key to success is to work with the school to form a partnership that will support your child along the way.

Start by asking a lot of questions before your child begins school or attends a new school.



1

Communicate with the school.

- Start early, if possible, in the spring before the next school year.
- Find out if your school or school district has a school nurse.
- Write to the principal and school nurse. Tell them about your child's food allergies and specific needs.
- Request a meeting with key people to start the planning process.
- Ask if the school/school district has any food allergy management policies in place.
- Inquire about staff training.
- Get copies of the forms you will need to have filled out before school starts:
 - Medication authorization forms – These forms state if your child can self-carry and/or self-administer medicines at school and are required even if the medicine will be stored and administered by school staff.
 - Special dietary meals accommodation form – You will need this if your child will be eating meals provided by school.
 - Emergency action plan (EAP) form – This tells caregivers what to do in case of an allergic emergency.
- Work with the school to create a written school health care plan – this is typically either an individual health plan (IHP or IHCP) or a 504 plan.

2

Visit your child's doctor before school starts to get the following:

- Required prescriptions for emergency medicine (epinephrine auto-injectors)
- Doctor signatures on the forms:
 - Medication authorization
 - Special dietary needs accommodation
 - Emergency action plan

3

Meet with the school nurse or representative before school starts and ask:

- When is the school nurse at your child's school? (Full-time, part-time, available by phone, etc.)
- If the nurse is not at your school, who takes care of students during the school day if they are sick? How does the health room operate during a typical school day?
- Where will your child's emergency medicine be kept **unlocked** during the school day?
- What experience has the school had with food-related emergencies?
- What are the procedures for shelter-in-place and evacuations? How are food and medicines handled during emergencies?
- How are food allergies managed on school buses and during after-school activities?
- How does the school deal with bullying about food allergies? Is there a zero-tolerance policy? Does the school educate students about food allergies?
- Does the school nurse train school staff on managing food allergies? Who and when?



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KIDS WITH FOOD ALLERGIES
A Division of the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

For more detailed information and a list of resources, please visit: kidswithfoodallergies.org

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Meet with the school/district food services director to find out:

- How the school manages meals in the cafeteria, lunch area, or classroom for students with food allergies
- How students with life-threatening food allergies will request meals with safe substitutions once you submit the signed special dietary needs accommodations form

5

Turn in all completed and signed forms and prescriptions before the first day of school, including:

- Medication authorization forms
- Emergency action plan (EAP)
- Special dietary needs accommodations form – if your child will be eating meals provided by the school
- Epinephrine auto-injectors in original package and labeled with your child's name – be sure these will **not expire** during the school year

6

Make an appointment with the teacher to discuss classroom management of food allergies, including:

- Allergen control strategies in the classroom and during “specials,” such as music or art
- Ingredient label reading
- Safe snacks (encourage fresh fruits and vegetables)
- Classroom celebrations (encourage non-food items)
- “No food sharing” rules
- Field trips (Who carries medicine? Can parents attend? etc.)
- Cleanup after eating or anytime food is brought into the classroom
- Food in classroom activities (encourage non-food curriculum)
- Handwashing practices before and after eating, or use of hand wipes (not hand sanitizer)
- Alerting substitute teachers about children with food allergies



7

Teach and encourage your child to build age-appropriate skills to manage food allergies, such as:

- Reading food labels, avoiding foods without labels, not sharing food
 - Handwashing or hand wipes (no use of hand sanitizer)
 - Self-carrying and how to use an epinephrine auto-injector (discuss readiness to self-carry with your child's doctor)
 - Knowing what their body might do if they were to have an allergic reaction
 - Telling a grownup if they start to have an allergic reaction at school
 - Reporting any bullying or harassment by staff or students
 - Sitting with their classmates in the cafeteria
 - Riding the bus and/or going on field trips
- Periodically check in with your child to ask how they feel at school.



8

Drop off items your child may need to store at school to keep them safe, such as:

- Hand wipes
- Non-perishable foods for disasters or shelter-in-place situations
- Special snacks or a non-perishable lunch for occasions your child may need them
- Allergy-friendly school supplies

9

Work together to form a partnership with your child's school.

- Document meetings and interactions via email summaries with key staff.
- Choose your battles wisely and volunteer when possible.
- Offer solutions whenever possible and collaborate with your child's school.
- Keep in mind that a friendly approach will help you get a positive result if conflicts start to happen.
- Check in periodically with school staff to make sure the plan is working and your child is adjusting.

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Visit kidswithfoodallergies.org/school for more information about managing food allergies at school.



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