

# Peanut Allergies In the School Environment

## Did You Know ...

- Allergic reactions can appear immediately after ingestion of allergen, or hours later.
- Many foods that do not contain peanuts are prepared or packaged with peanuts. Examples include sunflower seeds, baked goods, and chocolate candies.
- Allergic reactions can vary from tingling around the mouth to death.
- Only a trace of peanuts can cause an allergic reaction. This is why foods cannot be prepared on a surface that has been used to prepare peanut-containing foods.
- People who are allergic to peanuts are often allergic to other types of nuts.
- Students at highest risk for a fatal allergic reaction are those who have a peanut or tree nut allergy, asthma, and don't have quick access to appropriate medications.
- The addition of precautionary statements ("may contain") on labels is voluntary. At this time, the FDA does not require manufacturers to use them.
- Families and students are responsible for informing the school of any allergy, providing documentation thereof, and taking steps to avoid the consumption of peanut-containing foods.

## For more information

<http://www.foodallergy.org/school.html>

or contact

The Office of Public Instruction  
School Nutrition Programs  
PO Box 202501, Helena, MT 59620  
(406) 444-2501

*Denise Juneau, Superintendent*



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Office of Public Instruction  
Denise Juneau, State Superintendent



## Tips for Food Service Staff

The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network recommends the following procedures:

- **Identify the student.**
- **Know what foods to avoid and what foods to substitute.**
- **Develop a system by which every label of every food served will be checked to see if there are peanuts listed.**
- **Have a "safe zone" to prepare the allergic child's meals. A safe zone is a place in the kitchen where no peanuts or peanut products are used. This area should be cleaned and sanitized before and after using.**
- **Prepare peanut menu items with disposable plates, utensils, etc. to help eliminate cross contamination danger.**
- **Develop cleaning procedures to make sure that there is no cross contamination.**

So why not "peanut-free"? When the food service staff are aware that they are working with peanut products, it is safer than just not opening a can of peanut butter. Having a "peanut-free" policy can also put schools at risk for legal action if peanuts are found in the school.

Finally, it is the school's responsibility to serve the food; it is the parents' responsibility to tell the school what their child can or cannot eat. Don't hesitate to ask questions. Success is achieved by working in partnership with the child's parents and the student who has food allergies.

## A Team Effort ...

### School Responsibilities

- Be knowledgeable about allergies and follow federal guidelines.
- Include allergic student in all activities.
- Establish a team and a plan for care and dealing with emergencies.
- Ensure staff who have contact with student know about the allergy.
- Make appropriate medications accessible.
- Take threats or harassment against the allergic student seriously.

### Family Responsibilities

- Notify the school of the allergy.
- Work with the school team to develop a plan of care and a plan to deal with emergencies.
- Provide written medical documentation and instructions for dealing with the allergy and allergic reactions.
- Provide necessary medications.
- Educate the student on self-management of their allergy.
- Provide emergency contact information.

### Student Responsibilities

- Know how to manage their allergy.
- Report possible consumption of allergic food immediately.
- Know the emergency plan.

Designed by K.A. Pullman, RD  
Source: The Food Allergy Network, [www.foodallergy.org/school](http://www.foodallergy.org/school)