

Allergy Aware School and Childcare Settings

Tips for parents

If your child attends an “allergy aware” school or child care centre, you may be asked to help keep it safe and healthy for all children.

Children with a severe food allergy must not eat even tiny amounts of the food that cause them to have an allergic reaction. A severe allergic reaction can come on quickly and cause death. Even when a child tries to be careful, an accident can happen. A child with a food allergy and their family are responsible for staying safe but need help from other children, parents, and teachers to help reduce the risk of an accidental exposure.

- Ask the school or child care centre to give you the guidelines they ask families to follow. Some schools ask that lunches and snacks be free of certain foods, like peanut or tree nuts.
- Teach your child to wash his/her hands with soap and water before and after eating. This helps stop food from getting on other things like desks, toys and books. Washing hands is good for everyone; it can also help reduce the spread of colds and flus.
- Teach your child not to share his/her food, drinks or eating utensils with others. Many children love to share. Teach children to share non food items instead (e.g. toys, stickers, games).
- Think about guidelines for school events and fundraisers that might include food. Talk to a school staff member about “allergy aware” health and safety at these events. The school may request that specific foods or ingredients be avoided. Other guidelines may be in place to help all children make healthy food choices. Labelling foods with complete ingredient lists is good practice.

For more information

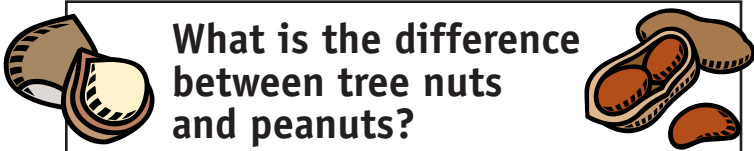
Dietitian Services at HealthLink BC: Call 8-1-1 or go to www.healthlinkbc.ca/dietitian to email your question.

BC Health Files “Allergy Safe Child Care Facilities” and “Severe Food Allergies in Children”:
www.healthlinkbc.ca/healthfiles

BC Ministry of Education Core Anaphylaxis Resources for administrators, teachers and parents:
www.bcsta.org/anaphylaxis

Allergy Safe Communities: www.allergysafecommunities.ca

Tree Nut and Peanut Food Allergens



What is the difference between tree nuts and peanuts?

Almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts (filberts), macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts (pignolias), pistachio nuts and walnuts are all **tree nuts**.

Peanuts are part of the legume family and are not a tree nut.

How can I know if a food contains tree nuts or peanuts?

- Read product ingredient labels carefully to make sure they do not list any source of tree nuts or peanuts in the food. Often, different names are used for tree nuts and peanuts. See the Health Canada fact sheets found at the websites below for other common names to watch for on ingredient lists.
- Avoid foods and products that do not have an ingredient list.
- Recipes sometimes change or use other ingredients so read labels **every time** you shop.
- Be cautious of bulk food items as they may have come into contact with trace amounts of nuts.
- Food allergic people should not eat products with a “may contain” warning with respect to their allergen(s).

References:

- Tree Nuts – one of the nine most common food allergens, Health Canada Fact Sheet http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/allerg/fa-aa/allergen_treenut-noix_e.html
- Peanuts – one of the nine most common food allergens, Health Canada Fact Sheet http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/allerg/fa-aa/allergen_peanut-arachide_e.html

Watch out for allergen cross contamination

Cross contamination is the transfer of an ingredient (food allergen) to a food that does not normally have that ingredient in it. Through cross contamination, a food that should not contain the allergen could become dangerous to eat for those who are allergic.

Cross contamination can happen:

- When **food is processed**, e.g. through shared production and packaging equipment;
- At **stores** through shared equipment, e.g., cheese and deli meats sliced on the same slicer; and through bulk display of food products, e.g., bins of baked goods, bulk nuts; and
- During **food preparation** at home or in restaurants through equipment, utensils and hands, e.g. if a knife used to put peanut butter on toast at breakfast is also used to make a sandwich for lunch. The sandwich may have traces of peanuts and would be unsafe to send to a peanut aware school or child care setting.

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