



Allergy Aware School and Childcare Settings

Tips for parents whose children attend allergy aware settings

If your child attends an "allergy aware" school or child care facility, you may be asked to provide lunches and snacks free of certain ingredients and follow some guidelines to help create a safe environment for children with these food allergies.

1. Check with your child's school or child care centre for guidelines on reducing allergen exposure. The guidelines can vary depending on the school or age of the children.
2. Read food labels and learn how to identify allergen ingredients. If you are unsure about a product, choose something else. For information on the many common names that identify allergen ingredients on food labels, refer to the Health Canada Fact Sheets at: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/allerg/fa-aa/index_e.html
3. Encourage your child to wash their hands with soap and water before eating, and wash their hands and rinse their mouth after eating (including breakfast and snacks).
4. Teach your child not to share his/her food, drink or utensils with classmates.
5. Encourage your child to help clean his/her eating area after meal and snacks.
6. Donating food for social and fundraising events? Check with your child's school or childcare centre first to find out if there are nutrition or allergy guidelines in place. If your child's school welcomes food brought in for special events, make sure all ingredients in foods are clearly labeled including home made items.
7. Parents involved in planning hot lunch school fundraisers: Check with the school administration first to find out if there are nutrition or allergy guidelines in place. Caterers and franchises must be made aware of food allergies and follow guidelines or policies outlined by the school.

For more information:

- φ Allergy Safe Communities at www.allergysafecommunities.ca
- φ BC Health Files: Severe Food Allergies in Children
<http://www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile100.stm>
- φ Healthlink BC, call 8-1-1



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 considered **tree nuts**.

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

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

- Read product ingredient labels carefully to make sure they don't 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.
- Manufacturers may occasionally change their recipes or use different ingredients so read labels **every time** you shop.
- Be cautious of bulk food items as they may be contaminated with trace amounts of nuts.

Watch out for allergen cross contamination

Cross contamination is the transfer of an ingredient (food allergen) to a product 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:

- During **food manufacturing** through shared production and packaging equipment;
- At **retail** 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. For example, if the knife used to put peanut butter on toast at breakfast is also used to make a sandwich for lunch, without being washed well, the sandwich may have traces of peanuts and would be unsafe to send to a peanut aware school or child care setting.

References:

- ϕ *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
- ϕ *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

For more information:

Healthlink BC, call 8-1-1