

Please don't pass the peanuts!

How to keep kids with allergies safe during the holidays

Maria Martino Evans

When Dawn Cirafesi of Bedminster took her son to a family picnic this summer, there were bowls of peanuts on every table – danger for a boy with severe allergies to milk, egg, wheat, soy and peanuts.

To keep him safe, she kept

him in his stroller and if other guests wanted to touch them, she handed them a wipe.

Now she calls the hosts beforehand and asks them to spread the word. They gladly oblige.

And she always has her epi pen and anaphylactic emergency plan – just in case.

“Family members now call us,” Dawn says. This Thanksgiving, they called to ask: Is nutmeg a nut?

And because it can be overwhelming to “non-food allergy” people to rattle off list of forbidden foods, she will tell them, if asked, safe items, including the brand so they don't have to spend time reading labels.

“All of the festivities around the holidays that revolve around food, increased open food displays and more opportunities to go to family and friends' homes present an increase in the risk for an allergic reaction and emergency room visits for kids with food allergies,” says Lynda Mitchell, president of Kids With Food Allergies (kidswithfoodallergies.org), based in Doylestown.

“Whether I'm going shopping for the day or to a party, I'm prepared,” says Leticia Torrado-Matich of Jamison. She will bake cookie or cupcakes that are safe for her 3-year-old son, Mason, who has peanut and tree nut allergies, “so he'll have a fun treat.”

She has taught Mason to ask if something is safe before touching it and also asks family to be mindful of his allergies. “And I watch him like a hawk. Parties are not enjoyable for

me.”

Just touching nuts can result in hives all over his body. A month ago, he had to be treated with steroids for five days because welts covered 80 percent of his body. He was probably exposed while grocery shopping. Although his parents wipe down the cart, wiping may not remove 100 percent of peanut protein.

So she – like most parents of kids with food allergies – carries an emergency kit with an epi pen, Benadryl, business cards for his allergist and pediatrician and an allergy action plan.

“I don't want to make him neurotic,” Leticia says. “He has to live in this world.”

Sue Reimer of Buckingham has two sons with food allergies: Charlie, 5, who also has autism, and Timmy, 27 months, who has the eight top food allergies and a few others. Because of his psoriasis, the Reimers cannot do skin scratch tests to determine all of the allergens.

“To give you an example, we tried to give him lamb and ended up staying overnight at a hospital in Vermont,” she says.

Because of that, Timmy's primary food is an elemental formula, basically just amino acids. Sue brings it to gatherings. “We don't eat out,” she adds, and relies on family members making the hour-long trip to babysit only occasionally.

Even at his young age, Timmy has learned to cross his two index fingers to indicate when a food – like the soft pretzel dad brings home – is “dangerous to Timmy.”

Even when entertaining at home, parents of kids with



More than month ago, Mason Matich was treated for hives that covered 80 percent of his body.

allergies need to be vigilant. Dawn doesn't let food be taken from her kitchen, unless it's “safe” for her son, and asks that other parents leave sippy cups of milk at home.

“Not every event has to be centered around food,” she adds. To reduce the risk for her son, “I try to be creative and have events at non mealtimes so people eat before they come and don't expect to be fully fed.”

Tips for hosts

The following is a few tips for hosts having holiday gatherings this year:

- Ask parents if kids have any allergies;
- Keep foods that may cause a reaction out of kids' reach;
- Make one thing that all children – allergic or not – can eat so no one is left out or singled out.



Three-year-old Mason Matich, who is allergic to peanuts, with his first batch of safe holiday cookies.

Riegelsville school petition sent back

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Commonwealth Court and is fully prepared to publicly revisit the issues that were buried in the secretary's in-house review,” said Michael Graeff, president of the coalition on Friday evening.

“In essence now that RTEC has bypassed the PDE's underhanded attempt at simply dismissing the case, it is most important to point out that the Commonwealth Court in its ruling has also quashed the legal notion put forward by the PDE and the solicitors that the secretary is his own personal Star Chamber on matters of school district transfer.”

The Commonwealth Court order gives legal credence that

geography does matter in determining educational merit among all of the other common sense issues that validate Riegelsville's petition, Graeff said.

RTEC plans to continue to point toward the community, county, and historical ties to the Palisades School District and the financial inequities created by the state's Act 1, which groups Riegelsville financially with Bucks County in the assessment of taxes. Easton residents pay a lower tax rate because Northampton County's real estate values are lower than the overall Bucks County values.

Graeff said that RTEC will focus on glaring disparities

between the Palisades and Easton in academic standards and levels of achievement.

“The secretary's final determination affects the coalition's right to seek a better public education for the children of the coalition's members and the other children in the Easton portion of the borough,” the state court observed.

The state education code, the Commonwealth Court decision stated, “gives parents the right to seek to improve public education of their children by filing a petition with the court of common pleas for the creation of an independent school district for the purpose of transferring to an adjacent school district.

Bridgetown Township hears bridge plans

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ty from a variety of hazards. The state Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 reinforces the importance of pre-disaster infrastructure mitigation planning to reduce disaster losses, and is aimed primarily at the control and streamlining of the administration of federal disaster relief and programs to promote mitigation activities.

The consequence for townships to develop an infrastructure mitigation plan is the chance of a reduced federal share of damage assistance from 75 percent to 25 percent if the damaged facility has been damaged on more than one occasion in the preceding 10-year periods by the same type of event such as flooding.

The supervisors passed a resolution of support for the Pennsylvania Highlands Coalition. The coalition is an alliance of nearly 200 nonprofit, municipal, state and federal organizations working collaboratively to protect vitally important natural resources in the Highlands of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. Passing the resolu-

tion makes the township eligible for federal money for projects that support the purpose of the Highlands

The builder of the Ringing Rocks Subdivision has informed the township that the name Clarion has been chosen for the lane located in the subdivision. Supervisors approved all three choices given- Clarion, Majestic and Belle at the November meeting.

In other business, supervisors

updated the township's fee schedule. The schedule, which includes zoning fees, permit fees and other fees, has not been revised since 1999.

A proposed 2009 budget was prepared Dec. 2 with plans to adopt it at the year-end meeting on Dec. 30.

Projected revenues were given as \$280,280. Projected expenditures are \$303,750. Projected balances are \$312,000 for the General Fund and \$11,800 for the State Fund.

Yeah, I thought when they said “bond” they meant US Savings bonds, so I did one better and threw in some Treasury notes. Needless to say I lost the bid...



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