



10 SCHOOL PLANNING TIPS

When Your Child Has Food Allergies



Most children with food allergies are happy and attend school safely every day. That safety and happiness is the result of planning and persistence. A key to success is to work cooperatively 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.



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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 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 plan – this is typically either an Individualized Health Plan (IHP) or a 504 plan

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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

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Meet with the school nurse or representative before school starts to find out:

- 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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Meet with the 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

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

- 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 – must be in original package and labeled with your child's name; be sure these will **not expire** during the school year

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

- 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)
- Hand-washing practices before and after eating, or use of hand wipes (not hand sanitizer)
- Alerting substitute teachers about children with food allergies



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

- Reading food labels, avoiding foods without labels, not sharing food
 - Hand-washing 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 a 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.



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Other items your child may need to store at school:

- 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

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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 for more information about managing food allergies at school.

