



POTENTIAL FOOD ALLERGENS

in Preschool and School Activities



According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, “Food used in lesson plans for math or science, crafts, and cooking classes may need to be substituted depending on the allergies of the students.”

Below is a list of some unexpected places you may encounter food allergens, along with alternatives and precautions. This is only a general guide and is not inclusive of every potential food allergen. It’s important to verify all ingredients yourself by contacting the manufacturer every time your child engages in an activity that poses an allergen risk. Remember, ingredients can and do change!

ACTIVITY/MATERIALS	ALLERGEN(S)	POTENTIALLY SAFE ALTERNATIVES AND APPROPRIATE PRECAUTIONS
Counting/sorting beans, grains, pasta, M&Ms® or other small foods	Potentially all*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to choose food items with safe ingredients • Remember that different-sized packages can have different ingredients or cross-contact issues
Sensory tables that use grains, pasta, candies or other small foods	Potentially all*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to choose food items with safe ingredients • Use non-food items
Baking projects	Potentially all*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share safe recipes • Request to participate in any baking activities
Projects using empty egg cartons, milk cartons, beverage cartons, yogurt containers, food jars, etc.	Potentially all*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide safe empty containers for the class • Purchase new egg cartons at eggcartons.com
Birthday and holiday celebrations	Potentially all*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a non-food celebration (i.e., songs, goodie bags, stickers) • Provide safe cake or cupcakes for the class
Play kitchen	Potentially all*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide safe “real” containers to replace allergenic ones, since empty “real” egg cartons, milk cartons, cereal boxes, baby food jars, etc. may contain allergens
Musical instruments – Allergens may be present on mouth-blown musical instruments	Potentially all*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove mouth-blown musical instruments from classrooms • Provide a designated set of mouth-blown instruments for your child’s use only
Handwashing (teachers and children)	Potentially all*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read soap, liquid soap, wipe and lotion labels to determine if allergens are present • Use paper towels to dry hands, since cloth towels may contain food residue
Finger paint	Wheat, Milk, Corn, Oat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to find milk-free finger paints • Read labels to find a safe laundry soap • Laundry starch or soap can be omitted if avoiding corn
Bird feeders	Wheat, Peanut butter, Nuts, Seeds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider making a hummingbird or butterfly feeder instead using sugar, water and food coloring • Use soy butter, sunflower butter or honey • Use regular Crisco® (contains soy oil and palm oil) or other safe hard shortening • Use safe seeds or seed mix without wheat seeds or nut oils
Planting seeds	Legumes (such as beans, peas or peanuts), Corn, Egg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to find potting soil free of nut shells and soy • Use any other seeds • Provide safe empty containers to grow seeds • Purchase new egg cartons at eggcartons.com
Potting soil	Nuts, Soy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to find safe potting soil

***Potentially all” means that all allergens are possible. For example, an empty egg carton may not just pose an egg risk. If the empty carton was used to store nuts, it could pose a nut risk. It would be safest to take extra precautions to avoid food allergens, such as buying new, unused egg cartons.*

ACTIVITY/MATERIALS	ALLERGEN(S)	POTENTIALLY SAFE ALTERNATIVES AND APPROPRIATE PRECAUTIONS
Paper-mache	Wheat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elmer's® Glue solution • Buckwheat flour solution
Play-Doh® (commercial or wheat-based homemade)	Wheat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moon Sand® or Moon Dough® • Homemade rice- or buckwheat-based play dough • Other sensory materials such as goop, slime or ooblick • Homemade play dough or ooblick (see recipe section below) • There are commercial gluten-free play doughs available at discountschoolsupply.com
Craft paste	Wheat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to choose food items with safe ingredients • Elmer's® Glue sticks
Macaroni art	Wheat, Egg, Legumes (such as beans, peas or peanuts), Corn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rice macaroni • Quinoa macaroni • Corn macaroni
Tempera paint (homemade and some high-end commercial products)	Egg	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crayola® Kids Paint • Read labels to find egg-free paint since some high-end versions contain egg • Most commercial paints are suitable for children
Crayons	Soy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to find soy-free crayons
Crayola® Wonder	Soy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to find a non-soy-based ink
Shaving cream	Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to find dairy-free shaving cream
Making butter	Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
Dustless chalk	Casein (milk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use dry erasers or smartboards
Ooblick, oobleck, goop, slime	Corn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read labels to choose items with safe ingredients • Create mixture using tapioca starch instead of cornstarch
Making maracas or shakers	Legumes (such as beans, peas or peanuts)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill maracas or shakers with rice, popcorn or sand

RECIPES	ACTIVITY/INGREDIENTS	ALLERGEN(S)/INSTRUCTIONS
	Rice Play Dough 1 ¼ cups rice flour ½ cup salt 2 tsp cream of tartar 1 cup water 1 tbsp oil ¼ tsp vanilla extract Food coloring/sparkles (optional)	Rice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix flour, salt and cream of tartar in a large pot. Add water and oil. • Cook over medium heat until the mixture pulls away from the sides of the pan (about 5 minutes), stirring constantly. • Add vanilla extract (for smell, not taste). Mix thoroughly. Put play dough on a clean surface. When cool enough to handle, knead lightly and store in airtight container. • Add food coloring to the water to make colored play dough. Add sparkles during the hand mixing time for sparkly play dough.
	Cornstarch Play Dough 1 cup cornstarch 1 lb baking soda 1 cup water ⅛ tsp oil Food coloring (optional)	Corn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a large pot, combine ingredients. Cook over medium heat until "mealy." Allow to cool on a plate, covered by a damp cloth. Knead well and store in an airtight container.
	Sweet Play Dough 3 cups powdered sugar ¼ cup corn syrup ½ cup margarine, melted Splash vanilla Sprinkle salt 5 drops food coloring	Corn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix all ingredients, except coloring, until mixture is blended and all one color. Then mix in coloring. • You can shape this and eat it, assuming your child is not allergic to any of the ingredients. Do not make this in advance. Make this when you are going to play with it. It will get hard and become inedible.
	Ooblick 1 ½ cups cornstarch 1 cup water Food coloring (optional)	Corn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix the ingredients together. When children play with the mixture, it will be solid when they squeeze it and liquid when they release it.