

Tips to Safely Celebrate Christmas with Food Allergies

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TAKE ALL FOOD ALLERGIES SERIOUSLY ■ TRACE AMOUNTS OF FOOD CAN CAUSE A REACTION

Christmas at Home

While most children are excited about the prospect of gifts under the tree, it's helpful to remind them why you are celebrating and to reinforce your family's beliefs. It is also a wonderful time to create your own new family traditions.

The holiday season is often filled with parties and celebrations with family and friends. The best option for your family will depend on your child's age, developmental level and individual medical history. Be sure to check our "safety tips" before planning or attending any celebrations involving food. You have options, whether you host or visit.

Host Your Own Party

The benefit of hosting at your home is that you have control over what is being served.

Options

Plan to make only safe foods. Check KFA's Safe Eats™ for allergy-friendly recipes. Inform friends and family of your plans to serve only safe foods. Have a list of acceptable foods or other items for family and friends to contribute (i.e., beverages, ice, fruit, paper products).

Allow some unsafe foods but have plenty of safe options available for your child. Put in place precautions (see "safety tips") to keep your child safe.

Religious Traditions and Family Activities

- Read the story of Christmas.
- Set up a nativity scene.
- Create a homemade Advent calendar (fill it with safe treats or special reminders of the season).
- Read favorite Christmas books and stories each night in December.
- Write a letter to Santa Claus.
- Attend a festival of lights.
- Buy presents for a child in need.
- Make homemade cards and gifts for family, friends and neighbors.
- Make crafts together - for example, handmade Christmas ornaments.
- Bake allergy-free treats together.
- Watch holiday movies together.
- Tour a local neighborhood decorated with Christmas lights.

Safety Tips

- ✓ **Wash hands before and after eating or handling food.**
- ✓ **Prevent cross-contamination in preparation and serving.**
- ✓ **Read the labels of all food ingredients.**
- ✓ **Prepare and cook safe meals first. Seal them and set aside. Then make unsafe foods.**
- ✓ **Keep unsafe foods away from safe foods when preparing, serving, and storing.**
- ✓ **Use separate serving utensils for each dish. Be careful not to mix them up.**
- ✓ **Wash all prep areas and eating areas with a paper towel and commercial cleaner. (Sponges and rags can be a source of allergens.)**
- ✓ **Try to keep food isolated to one area of the home and clean up thoroughly after the meal.**
- ✓ **Make a plate for your child before the meal is served to avoid cross contact.**
- ✓ **Depending on your child's age, you may want him/her seated close to you during the meal. Ensure that those eating nearby will be careful not to accidentally spill or share unsafe foods.**
- ✓ **Keep unsafe foods out of reach of young children with allergies.**
- ✓ **If food will be served and eaten throughout the house, bring packages of wipes to keep near the food and encourage everyone to wipe hands after eating, though encouraging them to use soap and water is best. Walk around periodically to dispose of any uneaten food or dirty plates and napkins.**

PROUDLY BROUGHT TO YOU BY



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Christmas at School

Ways to Celebrate without Food

The holidays are the perfect time of year to reach out to others in need. Have the class work on a project to help people in your community. Children can gather clothing, used books, or canned food items to donate. They can also create crafts that can be used to decorate local shelters, food pantries, nursing homes, or community **centers**.

Holiday Activities at School

- Read about the different holiday-themed traditions from around the world. Compare and contrast their traditions to ours.
- Have children create math problems using holiday themes and share with their classmates.
- Solve holiday-themed crossword puzzles and word searches.
- Have children write a story about their favorite Christmas memory. Have each child share it with the class.
- Have children read a Christmas or winter book and act out their favorite scene.
- Have older students read holiday books to younger students.
- Make ornaments, cards, stockings or other crafts together.
** There are many non-food craft ideas on sites such as Pinterest. For example, decorate gingerbread people or houses made out of foam, paper or cardboard; make snowmen out of socks and stuff with cotton batting.

**Be sure to check craft ingredients for allergens.

Parties Away from Home

Any celebration outside of your home needs to begin with a conversation with the host. It is important to talk about foods that will be served, your child's allergies and any necessary safety precautions. Below are several options for visiting someone else's home for the holidays. You will need to decide what works best for you and your **family**.

Options

- **Offer to work with the host to create a safe menu.**
Often a food can be made safe simply by adjusting the recipe slightly. Offer to prepare the food with the host and to help with label reading and preventing cross-contact.
- **Offer to bring a few "safe" food dishes to share with the rest of the family.**
Plate your child's food before everyone else and keep "safe" foods separated from unsafe foods to avoid cross contact.
- **Don't suggest any adjustments to the food being served by the host.** Instead, bring a safe meal for your child to eat while there. Pack lots of safe snacks and desserts too! Keep wipes handy for hand washing.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional ideas on school celebrations, see KFA's list of non-food rewards.

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