

Friends School Mullica Hill
Food Allergy Policy
3/1/2011

In order to provide an optimal learning environment, Friends School Mullica Hill seeks to promote the health and wellness of our students and faculty, and to provide a healthful school environment. To achieve this goal, the cooperative efforts of the school staff, students and parents are required by recognizing that the quality of student learning is directly related to their physical and emotional health.

This policy was adopted with the Quaker testimonies of equality, community and integrity in mind. It promotes respect and tolerance toward students with food allergies balanced with the opportunity for students without food allergies to have nut products at designated times.

Important information about food allergies

In almost every grade we have students with serious, life threatening food allergies. Researchers cannot identify why food allergies are on the rise in the United States, and at this time there is no cure or immunization on the horizon. This concern will remain for Friends School and every other school in the country.

Understanding food allergies is a constantly evolving process. The eight most common food allergens are tree nut, peanut, milk, soy, shellfish, egg, wheat and fish. Sesame is on the rise for number nine in the United States.

One of the most complex and dangerous aspects of food allergies is “cross contamination.” Cross contamination occurs when a food that does not itself contain any allergens is tainted with an allergen during food preparation, cooking, storage, or serving. It can occur at home, in restaurants or in manufacturing facilities.

Cross contamination is an extremely important food safety concern for people with allergies because many allergies have small threshold levels, meaning they require only a tiny amount of an allergen to trigger an allergic reaction. The amount of allergen protein that can be transmitted to an otherwise safe food through cross-contamination is often beyond this level.

Example of Cross Contamination:

IN THE HOME:

Cookie – If a cookie is baked on a cookie sheet that has not been thoroughly sanitized, it could have residual protein from a batch of peanut butter or tree nut cookies that were baked on the same tray the day before.

IN A MANUFACTURING FACILITY:

Cookie – A butter cookie has been processed on equipment shared with peanut butter cookies.

IN A RESTAURANT:

Three major vectors for cross contamination in restaurants are frying oil, communal grills, and frying pans. In addition, knives, cutting boards, spoons and other utensils that are used to cut or transfer multiple foods can be contaminated.

IN A CLASSROOM:

Some foods can leave oils or protein on crayons, toys, tables and other surfaces. Hands are also a potential vector for cross contamination.

Procedures

To maintain safety and inclusion for all students, the following procedures have been set in place.

SNACK

We have compiled a list of safe snacks in order to reduce the risk of cross contamination within the classroom. This reduces the amount of time that the teachers would spend wiping down and sanitizing the tables, reduces the interruption of quality learning time since students may remain in their assigned seats, and reduces the number of times students with food allergies are exposed to allergens.

LUNCH

The reason students are able to bring foods that are not on the safe foods list for lunch is because the school nurse or homeroom teacher inspects lunches and table distribution can be handled accordingly. In addition, all of the tables are wiped down and sanitized after all lunches in order to reduce the effects of possible cross contamination within the classroom. Students are instructed to wash their hands and get a drink after consuming food allergens.

CELEBRATIONS AND HOLIDAYS

The scheduling of birthday and holiday celebrations is to be arranged with the homeroom teacher and then ultimately approved by the school nurse. In order to maintain safety and inclusion for all students, the school nurse must approve food, drinks and craft supplies. Any food that is not on the safe foods list must have the manufacturer's list of ingredients and be processed in a peanut free facility. Baked goods from someone's home cannot be served due to the risk of cross contamination.

On the day of the celebration, the following steps should be followed:

- The parent must bring the food directly to the nurse's office in the morning.
- Students arriving by bus will take the food to his or her homeroom teacher, who will contact the nurse for review.

- The nurse will review the foods and determine if they can be served at the celebration.
- Any food found unsafe will not be served.
- We strongly advise e-mailing, calling or speaking with the nurse prior to the date of the celebration in order to avoid any confusion or disappointment on the day of the celebration.

We invite all members of our community to strive to create a safe place for each member, while at the same time finding fun, positive ways to celebrate special events and birthdays that still resonate with the celebratory role that food plays in our culture.