

Toorak Primary School Allergy Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What does having an allergy really mean?

People with an allergy can become sick when they come into contact with things that are harmless to most people. Examples include:

- Insects that sting (e.g. Bees, wasps)
- Medicines
- Food
- Things that they breathe in (e.g. dust mite, plant pollen, pet dander)

People with allergies to triggers they breathe in can get hay fever and asthma like symptoms like:

- Runny nose, sneezing and itchy eyes
- Cough, tight chest and get out of breath

However, people with allergies to food, medicine or insect stings can get very sick and have problems like:

- Get itchy red skin and lumps
- Face swelling
- Bad coughing and finding it hard to breathe
- Tummy ache and vomiting
- Dizziness/fainting

Most people have heard about peanut allergy, but lots of other foods can cause allergic reactions too. The most common foods people are allergic to are peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, wheat, fish, shellfish, soy and sesame seed.

Q: One of my child's friends has anaphylaxis and I am not comfortable having them over to play as I don't know what to do if something happens. Is there somewhere I can learn about how to respond in an anaphylactic situation?

A: ASCIA anaphylaxis e-training for first aid (community) has been designed to be undertaken by the broader community such as parents, friends, carers, patients, workplace or student colleagues and club members. The course is available free of charge at <http://anaphylaxis.ascia.org.au>.

Q: I am baking a cake for my child's birthday at school, what ingredients could cause an allergic reaction in a classmate?

A: Firstly, please be aware that there are many types of food allergies and you should ask the class teacher if any are present in your child's class.

If there are nut allergies present then the following items CANNOT be included in food for the class:

- X Any nut meal; such as almond meal, hazelnut meal
- X Nut essences; such as cashew essence, almond essence etc.
- X Nut Butters; such as peanut butter, almond butter, cashew butter

If there are allergies to eggs, gluten, dairy etc. please check with the class teacher and if they are not comfortable ask them to provide an alternate treat for the child with allergies.

Q: I sent my child to school with a peanut butter sandwich by mistake and they brought it home again. Why couldn't they just eat it away from the allergic child?

A: A child in their class area will be highly allergy / anaphylactic to peanuts and if your child was to eat it (even away from the allergic child) they may accidentally put some on the table, touch a book and potentially cause the allergic child to be very sick.

If this does occur the office staff will make contact with you to provide an alternative lunch. You will be asked not to provide that food in the lunchbox again.

Q: What other products may have nuts or allergens in them that I am unaware of please:

A:

- X Bottled pesto sauces contain large amounts of cashew nuts which could cause anaphylaxis in some children
- X Bottled curry sauces often contain nuts
- X Most muesli bars contain nuts
- X Some shampoos and conditioners contain almonds and macadamia oil which is harmful to some children
- X Moisturisers containing nut oils or essences
- X Nudie smoothies & some fruit juices that have had allergen fruit in them eg: kiwi fruit, strawberries etc
- X Yoghurt Lassis from Indian restaurants often contain pistachio nuts

Q: I feel overwhelmed by trying to do the right thing by providing food for my child at school or for birthdays and I don't want to endanger anyone. What can I do?

A: The best thing to do is emphasise to your child **NOT TO SHARE** their food if you are worried. If you want to provide a birthday treat for your child's class just make sure the ingredients are listed on the packet or container and let the teacher and allergic child make their own decision about eating the food. Don't be offended if they say no, they are just trying to save themselves a lot of anxiety and pain!

Q: My child keeps coming home and telling me that John is allergic to lots of things and to be careful what I put in his lunchbox this year? How can I ensure I am keeping John safe from harm at food times?

A: Firstly ensure your child is **NOT SHARING HIS OR HER FOOD** with anyone.

Secondly, ask the class teacher exactly what John is allergic to so you can make an informed decision about what to send to school going forward.

Q: School camp is coming up and I want to send my child with some snacks in case they don't like the food on camp. Can I?

A: It is school policy that no extra food is taken to camp to protect all children that are attending.

If you are aware that someone in your child's year level has severe allergies to substances that may appear in shower gel or shampoo/conditioner please do not send them with those items to camp. **Reading the labels on packages is an easy way to maintain the safety of all children with allergies.**

Q: I still want to understand more about allergies and how to deal with them if I look after someone else's child, where can I get more information?

A: Look at <http://www.allergy.org.au>, it is a wealth of information and is the official website of the Australian Society of clinical immunology and allergy.