

# 10 School Planning Tips

## When Your Child Has Food Allergies



### 1 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. This includes:
  - ✓ Medication Authorization forms. These forms state if your child can self-carry and/or self-administer medications at school. These forms are required even if the medication will be stored and administered by school staff.
  - ✓ Special Dietary Meals Accommodation form. You will need this form if your child will be eating meals provided by school.
  - ✓ Emergency Action Plan (EAP) form. This form 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.

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 lots of questions before your child begins school or begins attending a new school.**

### 2 Visit your child's doctor before school starts to get the following:

- Required prescriptions for emergency medications (epinephrine auto-injectors).
- Doctor signatures on all three of the forms:
  - ✓ Medication Authorization.
  - ✓ Special Dietary Needs Accommodation.
  - ✓ Emergency Action Plan.

### 3 Meet with the school nurse or school 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 medications 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 medications 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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For more detailed information and a list of resources, please visit [KidsWithFoodAllergies.org](http://KidsWithFoodAllergies.org).  
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## 4 Meet with the school/district 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.

## 5 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—need to be in original package and labeled with your child’s name. Be sure these will **not expire** during the school year.

## 6 Make an appointment to meet the teacher to discuss classroom management of food allergies.

- Allergen control strategies in the classroom and during “specials” such as music or art classrooms.
- Ingredient label reading.
- Safe snacks (encourage fresh fruits and vegetables).
- Classroom celebrations (encourage non-food items).
- “No food sharing” rules.
- Field trips (Who carries medication? 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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## 7 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.

Plus, you should periodically check in with your child to ask how they feel at school.

## 8 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.

## 9 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.

## 10 Visit [KidsWithFoodAllergies.org](http://KidsWithFoodAllergies.org) for more information about managing food allergies at school.

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