



# Nutrition Edition

Your Guide to Child Health and Nutrition



Nutrition Edition  
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CACFPRoundtable.org

## Safety First: Food Allergies in Childcare

**FOOD ALLERGIES** are becoming much more common today, affecting 1 in 13 children, with eggs, milk and peanuts topping the list. According to



the American Academy of Pediatrics, peanuts are thought to cause the most reactions, affecting 1–3% of children in the country. Childcare programs participating in the Child and Adult Food Care Program have the responsibility to be informed, prepared and proactive to ensure children's safety, while also accommodating their dietary needs.

Remember, a *food intolerance* affects the digestive system, but it is not life threatening; whereas a *food allergy* happens when an allergen triggers a

response in the immune system that can be fatal. A severe allergic reaction or *anaphylaxis* involves more than one part of the body and requires urgent action by injecting the person with *epinephrine (EpiPen)*, calling 911 and going to the emergency room immediately. About 25% of severe cases occur in those with no previous history, so knowing the signs and being prepared is imperative.

Allergic reactions range from mild to severe and can manifest within minutes or up to 2 hours from the time of exposure. The most common symptoms are:

- Tingling or itching of the mouth
- Hives
- Itching/eczema
- Swelling of the lips, face, tongue and throat
- Wheezing
- Itchy/runny nose
- Trouble breathing
- Abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting

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### Origins & Roles of Food

Prior to contact with the English, the Wampanoag of present-day Massachusetts and Rhode Island practiced an annual cycle of subsistence, moving from the inland valleys and woods where they would hunt turkey and deer in the winter, to the coast when the herring returned each May. The fish were smoked and dried, with any leftover after the new year fed to the soil for farming.

### Food Customs

It is a custom to provide a feast to dead ancestors with small plate offerings of food, known as spirit plates. These are placed into the fire allowing the smoke to carry it to the other world. It was also customary to feed any visitor that arrived and to travel with your own dish to be fed wherever you visited.

### Staple Foods

Corn, beans and squash, known as the three sisters, is a companion planting technique that came from the Americas. Herring, fish, shellfish, deer, turkey, duck, goose, cultivated wild onion, sunflowers (for seed), Jerusalem artichokes, wild harvested berries, fiddlehead ferns and mushrooms are also staple foods.

### Dining Etiquette

It is traditional to say a blessing for the food before eating a meal and let the elders eat first. Belching after eating is considered a compliment to a good meal.

Credit: Hartman Deetz,  
Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Member

INSIDE:

- Reading Food Labels for Allergens
- Recipes
- Autumn Apples
- Food Funny

## Safety First: Food Allergies in Childcare

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Whether your childcare facility is a peanut/allergen free facility or not, following these best practices will help you be prepared and ensure safety and peace of mind:

### DOCUMENTATION

- During the intake or interview with new families, ask about and document possible food allergies in the child, family and close relatives.
- If a child is diagnosed with a food allergy, ensure that parents provide an up-to-date allergy action plan, including a detailed description of the symptoms, along with the medication and dosage. The emergency plan must be signed by the parent and a healthcare professional. Go to [foodallergy.org](http://foodallergy.org) and search “emergency plan” to download one for free in English or Spanish. In addition, ensure that the child’s pediatrician also fills out the form “Medical Statement to Request Special Meals and/or Accommodations”, available through your CACFP sponsor. Make copies for the child’s file and to share with your staff. Have them updated regularly.
- When working with infants, let families take the lead on introducing new foods and have their approval before starting solids in childcare. Ask families to write down new foods introduced at home. Always observe children while they are eating for any non-verbal signs of a reaction.

### TRAINING

- Every adult in your facility should be trained on food allergies and how to administer an EpiPen; including having access to the emergency plans and knowing how to follow them. Look for an accredited food allergy training and preparedness program near you.
- Familiarize yourself with state laws and regulations on this topic, such as Elijah’s Law, which was created after the tragic death of a child from allergens. Their mission is to change policy around food allergy laws in school districts and childcare facilities in all 50 states; some have already passed this law.
- Be prepared, even if you do not suspect anyone in your care has food allergies. As an example, in California, during facility reviews licensing analysts are inquiring about how food allergies and emergency plans are

handled in an effort to bring more awareness and action on this issue.

### FOOD PREPARATION

- Read labels and ingredient lists thoroughly and carefully; ensure that the person in charge of food preparation or purchasing is currently trained on this topic. Remember that even if you choose to be an allergen free facility, many factories may use the same equipment to process foods that contain allergens.
- Wash hands with water and soap before, during and after preparing foods. If meals are served offsite and soap and water is not available use handwipes instead of just water or hand sanitizer, as they are not enough to remove all traces of allergens from your skin.
- To avoid cross-contamination, prepare allergen free meals and snacks before other foods. Also wrap, label and separate allergen free foods from the rest. If possible, feed the child at risk first or ensure there is separate space to eat safely.
- Designate specific utensils in different colors when preparing and cooking with allergen free ingredients. Use soap, hot water and friction to wash all cooking utensils and store them in a separate area.
- Teach other children in care that sharing foods with a child with food allergies is not welcome. Also, make sure everyone washes their hands and lips before they return to play.



Food allergies cannot be cured, they may not be outgrown and they can show up even when not suspected. Childcare facilities need to be proactive, educated on food allergies and diligent with documentation. Being prepared and aware means saving lives!

— *Alejandra Marín Santos*  
 Child Health and Nutrition Specialist, *CocoKids*

## KIDS' HEALTH &amp; SAFETY

## Reading Food Labels for Allergens

**ONE WAY TO AVOID AN ALLERGIC REACTION** is to carefully read food labels. The current eight major food allergens must be listed in plain language on the ingredients label: eggs, fish, milk, peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, soy and wheat. Starting January 1, 2023, sesame must be labeled as an allergen on packaged foods.

- Watch for substitutions in your food deliveries. The replaced food might have an allergen not found in the product you usually buy.
- Ingredients and manufacturing processes can change without warning. Make a habit of carefully reading labels at every purchase.

Allergens are included on food packages in one of three ways:

1. In the ingredients list, using the allergen's **common or usual name** (ex., "whole wheat flour")
2. In the ingredients list in **parentheses** after the ingredient that is not the common name (ex., "albumin (egg)")
3. Listed after the ingredients list in a **"Contains" statement** (ex., "Contains milk and tree nuts")

## LABELING ALLERGENS

## Example 1:

Ingredients: Whole wheat flour, enriched wheat flour, honey, soy.

## Example 2:

Ingredients: Whey protein (milk), lecithin (soy), albumin (egg), salt.

## Example 3:

Ingredients: Whole grain wheat, honey, natural almond flavor.

**CONTAINS WHEAT AND ALMOND**

Advisory statements for allergens are located after the ingredients list and vary by product. Some common types of advisory statements include:

- "May contain..."
- "Made on equipment..."
- "Processed or manufactured in a facility that also processes..."

Do not serve these products to a child with a specified food allergy. Even if a food has a small amount of the allergen, it could cause a reaction.

## ADVISORY STATEMENTS

## Example 1:

Ingredients: Whey protein, lecithin, salt.

**Contains milk and soy. May contain traces of tree nuts.**

## Example 2:

Ingredients: Sunflower seed, sugar, salt.

**Made on equipment that processes peanuts.**

## Example 3:

Ingredients: Sunflower seed, honey, salt.

**Manufactured in a facility that also processes peanuts.**

Advisory labeling is voluntary for manufacturers. No laws govern or require these statements. They may or may not indicate if a product unintentionally contains a specific allergen. Likewise, the absence of an advisory label does not mean that a product is safe.

## Tips for Reading Food Labels

- Familiarize yourself with the allergen and the foods it often appears in. Food allergens can appear in surprising places and go by less-common names.
- If you are unsure whether a product could have come in contact with the allergen(s), call the manufacturer. Ask about ingredients and manufacturing practices.
- If you encounter a product that doesn't have an ingredients list, don't buy it.
- Be extra careful with imported products. Food labeling regulations vary by country.
- With the help of an adult, a child with a food allergy can start checking food labels as soon as they learn to read. Practice at home and when you're shopping.

Sources: [Theicn.org/memo](http://Theicn.org/memo), [foodallergy.org](http://foodallergy.org)

## Nasaump

Nasaump is a traditional Wampanoag dish that is made from dried corn, local berries and nuts, similar to a porridge or oatmeal.

- Whole grain cornmeal** ..... 1½ cups
- Seasonal berries** ..... 1 cup
- Crushed walnuts, hazelnuts, sunflower seeds, or a combination** ..... ½ cup
- Water** ..... 4 cups
- Maple syrup** ..... to taste

1. Combine cornmeal, berries, crushed nuts, and the maple syrup in a pot of water and bring to a boil.
2. Turn down the heat to medium and cook, stirring frequently, for 15 minutes. Spoon into bowls to serve.

Yields: 12 servings

Meets requirement for whole grain-rich

— *Plimoth.org*

## Healthy Green Bean Casserole

- Green beans, trimmed, cut into 1- to 2-inch pieces** ..... 8 cups
- Olive oil, divided** ..... 2–3 Tbsp
- Onion, thinly sliced** ..... 1
- All-purpose flour** ..... 3 Tbsp
- Salt** ..... ¾ tsp
- Pepper** ..... ¼ tsp
- Low-fat milk** ..... 2½ cups
- Cheese, shredded** ..... ½ cup

1. Position oven racks in upper and lower third of oven; preheat to 425° F.
2. Toss green beans in a large bowl with 1 tablespoon oil until well coated. Divide between 2 baking sheets and spread in an even layer. Roast, stirring once and rotating the pans top to bottom about halfway through, until tender and beginning to brown, 20 to 25 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring frequently, until very soft and golden brown, 5 to 8 minutes. Add flour, salt and pepper; cook, stirring, for 1 minute more. Add milk and continue to stir, scraping up any browned bits until the sauce bubbles and thickens, about 4 minutes. Remove from the heat.
4. When the green beans are done, remove from the oven. Preheat the broiler.
5. Transfer half the green beans to a 2-quart, broiler-safe baking dish. Spread half the sauce over the green beans. Add the remaining green beans and top with the remaining sauce.
6. Sprinkle the cheese on top. Place under the broiler and watch closely, until it is bubbling, 1 to 5 minutes. Let stand for 10 minutes before serving.

Yield: 8 servings

Meets requirement for vegetables

— *Eatingwell.com*



## Fuel & Fitness

### AUTUMN APPLES

A field trip to an apple orchard is an awe-some autumn activity. PickYourOwn.Org lists farms throughout the country. Here's another option for exploring the apple harvest. Purchase some different varieties of apples, including some you've never tasted. Cut each apple in half and place one half on a paper plate labeled with its name. Surround with slices of that apple.

**Explore the 5 senses of taste, touch, sight, sound and smell.**



- Pass out apple slices.
- Describe what the apple feels like with your **sense of touch**. Does it feel wet or dry? Smooth or rough? Soft or hard?
- Investigate your **sense of smell**. Have children inhale deeply, what do they smell?
- Describe what the apple tastes like with your **sense of taste** and how a bite crunches with your **sense of sound**.
- Describe what the apple looks like with your **sense of sight**. What color is the skin and the flesh? What shape is it? Compare the apple colors and sizes.
- What's your favorite?

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**Food Q.** What role do green beans play in Thanksgiving dinner?  
**Funny A.** The casse-role.