



MANAGING FOOD ALLERGIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Follow these recommendations to minimize the risk of accidental ingestion or exposure to food allergens in the classroom.

More than 15% of school-aged children with food allergies have had an allergic reaction at school. These reactions range from mild to severe and even fatal.

FARE recommends the following tips that can help parents and school administrators minimize the risk of accidental ingestion or exposure to allergens in the classroom.

- **Keep the classroom food-free.** School administrators (in schools that have a separate cafeteria) may find that restricting food from the classroom altogether is the easiest and safest way to manage classroom activities.
- **Restrict identified allergens from the classroom.** If school officials choose to allow snacks or food in the classroom for meals, parties or other activities, it must be managed with care. With 1 in 13 of children having at least one food allergy, anyone serving food to children needs to be aware of food allergies and the potential for a life-threatening allergic reaction.
- **Find safe and inclusive ways to celebrate.** There are many ways to celebrate that do not involve food. Birthdays can be celebrated with crafts, games, or extra recess. Treat bags can be filled with tiny toys, no-homework passes, or other non-edible trinkets.
- **Foods provided for class-wide consumption must be selected with extreme care.** Teachers should be aware of their student's food allergies and special dietary needs. With parental permission, they can use this information to meticulously plan for a few "safe" foods that can be served during classroom celebrations. Extra care must be taken so that foods are approved and double-checked and that children eating in the classroom are monitored at all times.
- **Avoid the use of food in the curriculum.** Skin contact or ingestion of food allergens used in classroom projects are a frequent cause of allergic reactions. Avoid the use of foods in art, crafts, science and other classroom projects. Even used food containers (such as egg cartons) may pose a risk that is easily avoided.
- **Avoid using food as a reward.** A classroom movie, extra recess, a fun guest speaker or field trip can motivate students without endangering or excluding those with food allergies. If food is being used as a classroom reward, avoid ordering food from restaurants as trace amounts of allergens can endanger allergic students.
- **Keep epinephrine accessible.** Reactions are never planned. Make sure that epinephrine (EpiPen® or Adrenaclick®) is always within reach. Know the signs of anaphylaxis and enact emergency care procedures in the event of an allergic reaction. [Learn more about each of these devices here](https://www.foodallergy.org/epinephrine-options-and-training) (<https://www.foodallergy.org/epinephrine-options-and-training>).