

Teach Your Children to be a PAL to Friends with Food Allergies

One in every 13 kids in the U.S. has a food allergy, which equals to about two kids in every classroom. Food allergies are on the rise and the awareness about food allergies is increasing. It is important for parents and caregivers help their children be aware of food allergies at school and at play.

A food allergy is an abnormal response to a food triggered by the body's immune system. The response can be mild or in some cases severe and life threatening. Allergic response usually occurs following the first exposure to a food. However, a first or subsequent exposure to a food can occur without your knowledge.

The most common food allergies are to milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts such as walnuts and almonds, soy, wheat, fish and shellfish such as shrimp. However, a person can be allergic to any foods.

An example of this is a peanut allergy. You can have an allergic reaction by touching a peanut. You can have a reaction by using a product that contained peanuts. You can have an allergic reaction when breathing in peanut dust in the home or when close to other people eating them

An allergic reaction usually takes place within a few minutes to several hours. Symptoms can include itchy mouth, swelling of lips and tongue, vomiting, diarrhea, cramps, hives, eczema, trouble breathing and or drop in blood pressure.

Anaphylaxis is a severe form of an allergic reaction. It can occur suddenly and lead to death if not treated immediately.

Food allergies are serious. It is important to help your school children understand that foods that they eat can hurt others. If a friend or classmate has a food allergy, don't tease, bully or make fun of them help them to be a **PAL (Protect A Life from Food Allergies)**. Tell an adult right away if kids are being picked on about a food allergy.

A PAL doesn't share food. Children shouldn't share food with friends and especially with children who have food allergies. Kids can share jokes and laughs, but friends don't share with friends with food allergies at school.

A PAL washes their hands after eating. Wash hands with soap and water after eating is important. It is a good way to clean off any food that is on their hands. Such as if a child ate a peanut butter cookie they wash their hands as the remnants of the peanut butter could be still on the hands.

A PAL helps all friends and classmates have fun together. There are lots of ways to have fun without food. Listen to music, playing games, making crafts, riding bikes. This way it safe for everyone to have fun, and not to have to worry about food allergies.

A PAL helps a sick friend. If a friend with food allergies feels sick, get help right away. Especially if they think they may have eaten something they are allergic to, tell an adult right away or dial 911.

Teach children to be PAL by recognizing when a friend may be having a food allergy and knowing get help.

A PAL knows how to read labels. For older kids teach kids to read labels. The law requires that food labels identify the food source of all major food allergens. Unless the food source of a major food allergen is part of the ingredient's common or usual name, it must be included either in parentheses following the name of the ingredient or immediately after or next to the list of ingredients.

Source: Kids with Food Allergies.org and Food Allergy Research & Education