

Nut-Free Schools

People with allergies or food intolerances are often forced to watch others eat delicious foods that they are unable to consume themselves. It is understandable that partaking of a forbidden food may happen now and again. For many with a peanut or tree nut allergy, however, this occasional slip can actually be fatal, even after minimal exposure. This whole body allergic reaction is known as anaphylaxis, and may manifest as a skin, gastrointestinal, cardiovascular and respiratory problem.

Schools around the country have dealt with peanut and tree nut allergies in different ways. Unfortunately, many schools have discovered the only surefire way to protect their students is to become a nut-free campus. If one student eats a peanut butter sandwich and does not clean their hands, the oils they leave behind on any desk, chair or door handle has the potential to cause a fatal allergic reaction.



Since children are known as notoriously picky eaters, many parents find their child's menu choices drastically reduced when a school

becomes nut-free. There are many lists of nut-free suggestions on the internet that are quite unhealthy. Some of these may seem like an easy answer, but there are plenty of simple and healthy options available as well. Though it may seem stressful at first, food restrictions can be the impetus for truly fun and exciting family food exploration. You may discover your child has some unexpected food loves!

What can I bring to school?

Completely avoid the following:

- Almonds
- Brazil nuts
- Cashews
- Chestnuts
- Walnuts
- Hickory nuts
- Macadamias
- Pecans
- Pistachios
- Hazelnuts (Filberts)
- Pine nuts (Pignolia nuts)

Foods may unexpectedly use nuts as an ingredient. Be wary of the following:

- Chex mix
- Artificial nuts
- Nougat
- Cookies, candy, and other baked goods
- Grain breads
- Ice cream
- High-energy bars
- Cereals and granola
- Salad dressing
- Marzipan (almond paste)
- Marinades
- Cross contamination can be a problem when buying bulk foods.

Tree nuts are sometimes in body care products. One to watch for is Shea butter. When purchasing any product, watch for language like "may contain" or "manufactured in a facility that also processes nuts".

Most schools require that treats brought to share must be pre-packaged to ensure there was no cross contamination. Students personal lunches and snacks, however, can be homemade. Here are a few lunch & snack ideas you and your child can experiment with that are healthy.

- Soy nut butter or sunflower butter
- Cheese
- Fruit or Dried Fruit
- Veggies & dip
- Applesauce
- Hard boiled eggs
- Raisins
- Pretzels
- Rice cakes
- Tortilla chips & salsa
- Roasted soybeans

• Yogurt- Be watchful of labels, many yogurts are very high in sugar.

• Popcorn- This isn't a healthy option if you load it with butter and salt!

• Peanut butter is often the fallback for sandwiches and as a dip for fruits and veggies. There are many other dips that children often like. Try hummus,



guacamole, baba ghanouj or tzatziki.* You can introduce your child to spinach & bean dips as well. For dessert, pair an apple with caramel.

• Try doing thermos lunches. Soups are a good way to avoid nuts and ensure your child will eat well.

• Green smoothies are an excellent way to pack a lot of nutrients into a sweet snack. Put an assortment of greens and fruit into a blender with water, milk or juice and blend! If you keep the ratio of greens to fruit at 40/60 children won't notice greens they normally avoid. Some nice combos include kale, bananas & oranges; strawberries, bananas & romaine; or pears, kale & mint. During blueberry season be sure to add blueberries to the mix!



• Make your own trail mix or granola with your child without nuts. It could include dried fruit, pretzels, safe cereals, chocolate chips, and yogurt raisins or chips. This also involves the child in creating their own lunch.

When dealing with food restrictions, it is important to read labels thoroughly. When life is too hectic, there are some food brands you can rely on for safety. Namasté, Ener-G, Perky Os cereal, Pamela's, Ian's & Enjoy Life are all guaranteed food allergy free brands.

* Hummus is a chickpea dip, baba ghanouj is eggplant based and tzatziki is a cucumber yogurt dip. Want to learn more about these dips? Feel free to ask at the Marquette Food Co-op.

Getting Started

Want to get started on making wholesome nut-free snacks for your child? Try this simple and delicious applesauce.

Homemade Applesauce

1 1/2lbs apples, cored, peeled and cut into 1in. chunks
1/2C. water
1TB lemon juice

In a medium saucepan, add apples, water and lemon juice.

Cook covered on medium heat for 10 to 15 minutes until apples are soft and water is evaporated. If you like your applesauce very smooth you can blend when cool. Store in a sealed container for up to one week.

For a delicious variation add 2/3C frozen blueberries, strawberries or raspberries with the apples.

Looking for more recipes? Try *The Kid-Friendly Food Allergy Cookbook* by Leslie Hammond & Lynne Marie Rominger. It features more than 150 recipes, including the one above, that avoid common allergens and are low in sugar. Recipes for alternative dips like baba ghanouj and tzatziki are also in this excellent book. Before you buy it you can test recipes by checking the book out from Marquette's Peter White Public Library.

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Everyone Welcome!
No Membership Required

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