



Northgate Primary School

Managing Nut and Peanut Allergy in School

Introduction

Food allergenic children will gain a better awareness of their allergies and learn avoidance strategies if they move in an environment where allergens may turn up unexpectedly. The following advice is to help minimise the risk of any such occurrence.

Nut bans

It is understandable why some schools choose to enforce 'nut bans', where it is forbidden for pupils to bring nuts, peanuts and food containing nuts and peanuts to school. However, there are several pitfalls in this approach.

1. It is impossible to provide an absolute guarantee that a school is truly nut-free. The danger of banning nuts may be led to a false sense of security.
2. If you ban peanuts, what happens when other parents say they want similar policies implemented in relation to milk, eggs, sesame, fish, fresh fruit and latex?
3. Parents who demand nut-free zones may risk possible confrontation with other parents. In such an atmosphere, the risks may actually increase.
4. There is a strong case for arguing that food-allergic children will gain a better awareness of their allergies, and learn avoidance strategies, if they move in an environment where allergens may turn up unexpectedly. If they are trained to be vigilant, their growing awareness may pay dividends one day when, for example, a friend offers them a biscuit at a party. If they are used to a nut-free environment, they may take the biscuit without thinking.

Based on the above we recommend schools do not ban nuts and products containing nuts, however an appropriate risk assessment will require to be carried out.

While allergy awareness should become part of the school routine, it's important to remember that each child is an individual and will have individual needs, so it's important not to make assumptions about their requirements. For example, a few children might experience symptoms when they are in close proximity to peanuts, but others would have to ingest the allergen before having a reaction.

Protocols for administration of medicines will not be affected by this guidance.

Schools will need to consider the following:

Communication – Parents

Staff

Pupils with allergy

Pupils without allergy

Day to day life – Lunchtime

Nursery Children

In the classroom

Other activities

Communication

Parents

It is important for parents of children with nut and peanut allergy to agree the basic policies put in place by the school, governing day to day life.

It will be necessary for schools to consult individual parents when children enter a school and throughout their stay. Parents of children with nut and peanut allergy will be very knowledgeable about their child's allergy; schools should use this to establish protocols and inform others.

Parents of non-allergic children

Schools need to advise parents of non-allergic children of the fact that there is a child with nut or peanut allergy in the school. Advice to parents should be to emphasise to their child that they must not swap food.

Staff

As with the administration of medicines all staff who are likely to come in contact with children require to be fully informed about the child's allergy. Staff will need to know about any changes in the child's circumstances relevant to their allergy. Refresher training on allergy awareness must be an integral part of the schools communication process.

If there is no food around, a food-allergic child is unlikely to have a reaction – but the risk is not zero. For example, a child might touch a door handle on which there is allergen residue. The risks are small, but awareness should still be maintained. 3 Reviewed and ratified Summer Term 2015.

Pupils with allergy

Children, including those as young as 5 years will already have a good understanding of their allergy. Schools and parents should work together to ensure children understand they should not accept food from other children. It may look safe but this isn't always the case.

Pupils without allergy (helping non-allergic pupils to understand)

Making sure all children are aware of the issues surrounding serious allergies can sometimes seem like a dilemma for teachers and school staff – how to spread the message while maintaining confidentiality.

Where allergies are concerned, parents are usually happy to waive confidentiality. They usually want everyone to know. The important thing is to discuss it with them before any information specific to their child is handed out.

Ways to increase the understanding of non-allergic children are:

- Ask the allergic child (depending on their age) to talk to the class about their allergies and the 'rules' they have to follow to stay safe.
- Use materials provided by the Anaphylaxis Campaign for very young children, such as the Cyril the Squirrel book.
- Incorporate allergy information into curriculum activities where it is appropriate – for example, when teaching about food and nutrition.
- Stress the importance of the children washing their hands with soap, to remove any food allergens that might be there after eating.
- Send letters home to parents to remind them about allergies in school and the importance of reminding children not to swap food with children who have food allergy.

Day to Day Life

Lunchtime

The choice of whether to send a child with nut or peanut allergy for school lunch or provide them with a school lunch is a parent's decision.

Policy for Managing Nut & Peanut Allergy in School

Agreed by Staff: November 2018

Agreed by Governors: November 2018

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Chair of Governors