

## Managing Food Allergies in Child Care

What would happen if a child in your child care facility had an allergic reaction to food? Would you know what to do? According to the Center for Managing Chronic Disease, 25% of children with a food allergy may have their first reaction in a child care or school setting. Food allergies can be life threatening and each minute counts for saving the lives of those experiencing an allergic reaction. This is why it is important to establish and implement a food allergy response policy in your child care program.



### Steps for Success

#### **STEP 1: Create a food allergy policy for your child care program.**

- Form a team to write a food allergy policy, that includes parents.
- Develop an emergency plan specifically for your child care facility.
- Notify parents about the plan.
- Notify parents about any reactions or exposures to allergens.
- If outside foods are allowed, limit to pre-packaged foods with complete ingredient lists.
- Keep information about children with food allergies confidential.

#### **STEP 2: Create an individual food allergy plan for each child with a food allergy.**

- Obtain a completed medical statement from parents/guardians.
- Work with parents to create a plan to treat a reaction if it occurs.
- Keep the plan where you can refer to it as needed.
- Obtain any necessary medications from parents. Be sure you and your staff understand when and how to give each medication.
- Keep medications in a location that is secure.

**STEP 3: Train staff on food allergies and steps to take in case of an allergic reaction.**

- Train staff on the center's food allergy policy and each child's individual food allergy plan.
- Train staff on common allergens and symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- Instruct staff on when and how to give medications.
- Ensure confidentiality of children's medical information.

**STEP 4: Take actions to avoid exposure to food allergens.**

- Prepare allergy free food first, then cover it and put aside in a place where it won't come in contact with allergen containing foods.
- Wash hands with soap and water before and after each task.
- Wash, rinse, and sanitize all utensils and cookware after each use.
- Store foods so that allergy-safe foods do not come in contact with other foods.
- Clean and sanitize tables and chairs before and after meals and snacks.
- Create a way for staff to be able to identify children with food allergies.
- Avoid foods that a child is allergic to in art projects or cooking activities.

**STEP 5: Train staff to read food labels for allergens.**

- Most food labels list the top eight allergenic foods using their common name (milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, soy, fish, and shellfish).
- Check labels for warning statements such as "may contain," "produced on shared equipment," or "produced in a plant that uses." These foods should not be served to children with allergies.
- Check ingredient labels for allergens on every product each time food is purchased. It is not uncommon for food companies to change the food ingredients.

For more information about managing food allergies in child care, check out *Managing Food Allergies: Child Care Centers* at [http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/\\_static/resources/5454.pdf](http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/resources/5454.pdf)

**Fruit of the Month**

It's Fruit Time! The fruit of the month is the apple. There are over 2,500 varieties of apples harvested in the United States; Washington, New York, and Michigan are among the top states for producing the most apples. Apples are great sources of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Not to mention, apples are a very popular fruit for children and adults. Introduce apples to young children by visiting an apple orchard or your local grocery store to view the different types of apples.



## Nutrition Fact of the Month

Do you know why it's important to drink water?

Water is an essential nutrient, which makes up 75% of the body. Water transports oxygen and nutrients to cells throughout the body. It aids in protecting the spinal cord and cushioning joints and organs. Water

regulates the body temperature, which serves as an inner cooling system for the body. In addition, drinking water helps to remove waste, which promotes a healthy digestion and metabolism. For more information on water, check out *All About Water* at <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20120301113126.pdf>



## Nutrition Tip of the Month

Do you find yourself preparing too much food or not enough food during mealtimes? Begin today by standardizing recipes to aid in preparing meals that are “just right” for your child care program. Standardized recipes are tried, adapted, and retried several times to produce the same results and number of servings each time it's prepared. In addition, standardized recipes help control food

cost and overspending. For more information on how to adjust and standardize recipes, check out the Recipe Adjustment Fact Sheet, which features the *USDA Recipes for Child Care Booklet* at <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20100211044827.pdf>

## Sources

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). *Handwashing: Clean hands save lives*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/>
- National Food Service Management Institute. (2012). *All about water*. Retrieved from <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20120301113126.pdf>
- National Food Service Management Institute. (2009). *Recipe adjustment*. Retrieved from <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20100211044827.pdf>
- National Food Service Management Institute. (2012). *Managing food allergies: Child care centers*. Retrieved from [http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/\\_static/resources/5454.pdf](http://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/_static/resources/5454.pdf)
- The Center for Managing Chronic Disease. (2011). *Food allergies in child care centers*. Retrieved from <http://cmcd.sph.umich.edu/food-allergies-in-childcare-centers.html>
- University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension. (n.d.). *Apples*. Retrieved from <http://lancaster.unl.edu/nep/fruvegbw.pdf>



October 2013, continued

### **CACFP Rock Star of the Month**

The CACFP Rock Star of the month is Ms. Michele Hancock. Ms. Hancock is a Center Director from Davenport, Iowa. She is best known for her passion for planning menus that incorporate a wide variety of foods with different textures for the children in her care. Ms. Hancock utilizes the center's garden to teach children about fruits and vegetables, and also uses this time to introduce new foods. To further her knowledge and expand on her skill set, Ms. Hancock regularly seeks professional development opportunities, such as obtaining the National Early Childhood Education Administrator's Credential and working closely with her local Resource and Referral Agency.

Congratulations, Ms. Hancock! You are indeed a CACFP Rock Star.

## *It's News Time*

The Child Care Food Program (CCFP) Roundtable will host its 22nd Annual Conference in Sacramento, California. The conference will be held at the Sheraton Grand Sacramento on October 28-30, 2013. This year's theme is "Training for CACFP Success". NFSMI has the grand opportunity to speak at the General Session and provide additional training sessions. For more information about registering for this conference and attending NFSMI's sessions, check out CCFP's website at <http://www.ccfproundtable.org/Conferences.aspx>

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) will host their Annual Conference and Expo in Washington, DC. The conference will be held at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center on November 20-23, 2013. This year's theme is "Imagine, Innovate, Inspire". NFSMI will present the *Basics of Good Nutrition, What is it*. For more information about registering for this conference and attending sessions, check out NAEYC's website at <http://www.naeyc.org/conference/>