

# Food Allergies: Teacher's Guide



**CFAAR**

Center for Food Allergy  
& Asthma Research

## Overview

This guide serves as a valuable resource designed to accompany lessons and educational activities focused on food allergies for students of different age groups. Its primary purpose is to provide educators with the necessary tools and information to effectively teach students about food allergies while promoting awareness and fostering a safe and inclusive classroom environment.

## Food Allergy vs Intolerance

Food Allergy	Food Intolerance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An immune response to foods in which the body perceives as a threat</li><li>• Potential to be life threatening</li><li>• Top 9 allergens: peanut, tree-nut, egg, milk, shellfish, fin fish, wheat, soy, and sesame</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The body has difficulty digesting certain foods</li><li>• Usually not life threatening</li><li>• Symptoms: stomach pain, cramps, gas, bloating, and diarrhea</li></ul>

## Understanding an Allergic Reaction

Anaphylaxis	How to Respond
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Severe allergic reaction, resulting in symptoms from more than one body system</li><li>• If the individual is having difficulty breathing or swallowing, has a weak pulse, or has fainted</li></ul>	Be on the lookout for signs and symptoms and when in doubt, administer epinephrine (it is a safe medication) and <b>CALL 911!</b>

### ***What do you do if there are no medicines or resources near you?***

Get an adult or call 911 immediately. Stay with the person who is having a reaction and do your best to support them. If they are uncomfortable or dizzy, they may feel better if you help them lie down.

### ***How long does it take for the medicine to work?***


The medicine used for allergic reactions to food is called epinephrine. It is administered through an auto-injector, often called an epinephrine auto-injector. It generally starts to work within a few minutes. If someone has a severe allergic reaction to a food, they may need more than one dose of injectable epinephrine to get better. This is why it is important to call 911 so the patient can be monitored for any ongoing symptoms.

### ***What are 3 things you can do to help if someone is having an allergic reaction?***

1. Get help; tell an adult and call 911 if needed
2. Stay with your classmate/friend and watch for symptoms
3. Give medications if needed

## Signs and Symptoms

### Elementary School Graphic:



**Mouth/ Throat**

- Your mouth might feel tingly
- Your throat might feel itchy
- It might be hard to swallow or talk

**Lungs**

- You might cough a lot or have a hard time breathing

**Skin**

- Your skin might get red and itchy

**Head**

- Your head might hurt
- You may feel scared


**Heart**

- You might feel your chest hurt or your heart beat really fast
- You may feel dizzy

**Stomach**

- Your stomach might hurt
- You may feel like you need to go to the bathroom or throw up

### Middle School Graphic:



**Mouth/ Throat**

- Your mouth might feel tingly
- Your throat might feel itchy
- It might be hard to swallow or talk

**Lungs**

- You might cough a lot or have a hard time breathing

**Skin**

- Your skin might get red and itchy

**Head**

- Your head might hurt
- You may feel scared


**Heart**

- You might feel your chest hurt or your heart beat really fast
- You may feel dizzy

**Stomach**

- Your stomach might hurt
- You may feel like you need to go to the bathroom or throw up

### High School Graphic:



**Mouth/ Throat**

- Lip/tongue swelling
- Difficulty swallowing
- Hoarse voice
- Itchy mouth
- Throat tightening
- Mouth or throat tingling

**Lungs**

- Chest tightening
- Nasal congestion
- Repetitive cough
- Trouble breathing
- Wheezing

**Skin**

- Hives
- Itching
- Rash
- Swelling

**Neurological**

- Anxiety
- Feeling of impending doom
- Headache

**Cardiovascular/Heart**

- Chest pain
- Rapid heart rate
- Fainting, dizziness, or feeling lightheaded
- Low blood pressure

**Gastrointestinal (GI)**

- Belly pain
- Cramps
- Diarrhea
- Nausea
- Vomiting

## How to use an Epinephrine Auto-injector

### 1. Remove Cap



or

### Remove Case & Cap



then



### 2. Place on THIGH and PUSH HARD. Hold for 3 seconds.



or



then HOLD



### 3. Call 9-1-1 and GET EMERGENCY CARE.

The above image depicts step by step instructions for using an Epi-pen (left) and Auvi-Q (right) which are two brands of epinephrine autoinjectors. Epinephrine autoinjectors are lifesaving medications to be used when someone is having an anaphylactic reaction. **It is a safe medication, so when in doubt, always use epinephrine and call 911.** It is important to know that when giving epinephrine, it can be given through clothing and the needle will not be seen.

***Each device also comes with a trainer (there is no needle) so anyone can practice. If you are interested in obtaining trainers, please contact us and we would be happy to provide them.***

It is also important to know that most schools have stock epinephrine available in case of an emergency where an epinephrine auto-injector is not available or is not with the child. Please check with your school policy and/or school nurse if someone is available on-site.

***If your school has a nurse, consider having them show students how to use an epinephrine auto-injector.***

For additional information on other epinephrine autoinjector brands and subsequent training videos, please visit the link below:

<https://www.foodallergy.org/resources/epinephrine-options-and-training>

## Cross-Contact and Reading Food Labels

What is Cross-Contact?	Understanding Food Labels
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When an allergen comes into contact with a safe food and leaves traces of that allergen</li><li>• Small amounts can cause a life-threatening reaction</li><li>• Danger will not be eliminated through baking or boiling the allergen, only complete avoidance of contact with the safe food</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Laws require listing the presence of all major allergens on food labels (listed in the ingredients section)</li><li>• As of 2023, the top 9 allergens required to be listed are: peanut, tree nut, milk, egg, shellfish, fin fish, soy, wheat, and sesame.</li><li>• Manufacturers can choose to include a precautionary allergen label (PAL), stating the food item was made on shared equipment<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ This is not required, but brings awareness to possible cross-contact</li></ul></li></ul>

\*PAL is voluntarily placed on packaged foods and is not standardized. It is important to call the manufacturer to understand the practices to determine if this is a safe option. Speak about this with your doctor for additional advice.

### ***Examples of cross contact:***

- Touching the hand of a friend who was recently eating an allergen and then touching your mouth
- Kissing someone who has recently eaten the allergen
- Through a cough or in airborne saliva while talking
- Using the same utensils for foods with and without the allergen

\*It's important for everyone to wash their hands AND wash anything that may have come into contact with food both before and after eating to prevent allergic reactions.

## Breaking down a food label:

**Nutrition Facts**

	Amount/Serving	%DV*	Amount/Serving	%DV*	Amount/Serving	%DV*
Serving Size 1 Bar (68g)	<b>Total Fat</b> 5g	<b>8%</b>	<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>	Insoluble Fiber 3g	
<b>Calories 250</b>	Saturated Fat 1g	5%	<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	7%	Sugars 20g	
<b>Calories from Fat 45</b>	Trans Fat 0g		<b>Potassium</b> 230mg	6%	Other Carbohydrate 20g	
	Polyunsaturated Fat 1g		<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 44g	<b>15%</b>	<b>Protein</b> 10g	<b>18%</b>
	Monounsaturated Fat 2.5g		Dietary Fiber 4g	16%		

\*Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

**INGREDIENTS:** Organic Brown Rice Syrup, Organic Rolled Oats, **Soy Protein Isolate**, Organic Cane Syrup, **Organic Roasted Soybeans**, Rice Flour, Cocoa<sup>1</sup>, **Organic Soy Flour**, Organic High Oleic Sunflower Oil, Organic Cane Sugar, Organic Oat Flour, Organic Oat Fiber, Natural Flavors, Alkalized Cocoa<sup>2</sup>, Organic Cocoa Butter<sup>3</sup>, Sunflower Oil, Salt, Barley Malt Extract, Green Tea Extract (Contains Caffeine), Unsweetened Chocolate<sup>4</sup>, Soy Lecithin, Baking Soda, **VITAMINS & MINERALS:** Dicalcium Phosphate, Magnesium Oxide, Ascorbic Acid (Vit. C), DL-Alpha Tocopheryl Acetate (Vit. E), Beta Carotene (Vit. A), Niacinamide (Vit. B3), Ergocalciferol (Vit. D2), Thiamine Mononitrate (Vit. B1), Pyridoxine Hydrochloride (Vit. B6), Riboflavin (Vit. B2), Cyanocobalamin (Vit. B12).

**ALLERGEN STATEMENT: CONTAINS SOY. MAY CONTAIN PEANUTS, TREE NUTS, WHEAT, AND WHEAT.**

Contains 45mg of caffeine. Consume caffeine responsibly. Not recommended for pregnant or nursing women, children under 18 years old, or people sensitive to caffeine. <sup>1</sup>Rainforest Alliance Certified<sup>™</sup>

The only allergen found in this food was soy!

This statement alerts customers which of the top 9 allergens are in this product and is required by law.

Precautionary allergen labels are determined by manufacturers for possible cross contamination, but not required by law.

## Precautionary Allergen Labeling vs Allergen Labeling:

Examples of common allergen labels:

- Contains
- Allergy Information
- Allergen Statement

Examples of common precautionary allergen labels:

- May Contain
  - Allergy Advice
  - Processed in a facility...
  - Manufactured on equipment that processes...
  - Manufactured on shared equipment
  - Manufactured in a plant that processes
- \*Ingredients listed in bold are also allergens

***If an ingredient label has a precautionary allergen label, does that mean that someone allergic to that allergen cannot eat the food?***

In a school setting opt for extra caution and avoid giving a food allergic child a food item with a PAL, unless otherwise directed by their parents. It is typically up to the food allergic individual and their parents to decide as these statements are meant to make you aware of the potential for cross-contact. It is possible for even a tiny particle of an allergen to touch a food during its production, such as on a factory counter, which can cause someone to have an allergic reaction. This can happen even if the allergen was not put in the food as a direct ingredient. For this reason, if there is a chance that the allergen can be in the food, there is a chance that those with an allergy could have a serious reaction to it, and they should avoid this food.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### ***How do you get a food allergy?***

No one really knows why some people get food allergies and other people do not. We do know that food allergies run in families, and food allergies are related to genetics. Most people with food allergies develop allergies when they are babies or kids, but some people get food allergies for the first time when they are adults. Someone can begin to have an allergy at any time in life, which is one reason why it is important to tell an adult when you do not feel well. Many people will never have allergies or food allergies.

### ***How do you grow out of food allergies?***

For some people with food allergies, the immune system eventually recognizes that foods are not dangerous and stops attacking them. People who outgrow their food allergies are then able to eat the foods without having a reaction. There is no way to determine when or if someone will outgrow their allergies.

### ***How long does it take for an allergic reaction to occur?***

Allergic reactions to food generally happen very quickly after a person with a food allergy eats or drinks the food – the symptoms can develop within minutes. Most reactions happen within two hours of eating or drinking the food. However, a second delayed reaction is possible where symptoms can develop after an extended period of time. Therefore, it is important to monitor the child after a reaction and be prepared to give a second dose of epinephrine if needed.

### ***How does epinephrine work to stop an allergic reaction?***

Epinephrine is also called adrenaline, which is a natural chemical made by the body. In an allergic reaction, blood moves from the larger vessels to smaller vessels, and away from being pumped by the heart, which can lead to shock and death. Epinephrine injections work against this process. It funnels the blood into the big vessels so that the heart can pump it around the body, which helps keep the person alive. In addition, epinephrine keeps the airways in the lungs open, so that the person can keep breathing, despite the constriction that can happen in an allergic reaction. Epinephrine also decreases the itching, swelling and hives caused by an allergic reaction.

### ***Why do you have to go to the emergency room after taking epinephrine?***

Epinephrine is a safe medication. The main reason to go to an emergency room after taking epinephrine is to have access to additional lifesaving measures and care providers in the case that the reaction should not fully improve with the epinephrine. Sometimes, an allergic reaction will resolve with epinephrine and later return, in what is called a “biphasic” reaction. For this reason, it is important to stay at the emergency room several hours after a reaction has improved, to ensure that care is available if life-threatening symptoms return.

### ***Are some food allergies more severe than others?***

All food allergies can range from mild to life-threatening. Each reaction is unique. An individual may have a life-threatening reaction to a food that caused mild symptoms in the past. Due to the unpredictability of allergic reactions, it is important to treat all allergies seriously and always carry your epinephrine auto-injector.

### ***What treatments are available for individuals with food allergies?***

It is important to know that food allergies are not curable, nor can they be prevented with medications. Currently, the best treatment is avoidance of the allergen. If the allergen has been ingested and severe symptoms arise, injectable epinephrine may be administered. Epinephrine, also known as adrenaline, can stop a reaction after it has begun. Epinephrine is most often administered with an auto-injector.

**\*\***After injecting epinephrine, symptoms may subside within a few minutes. More than one dose of epinephrine may be necessary to halt a reaction. Other treatments include antihistamine (for skin system symptoms) and albuterol (for respiratory symptoms).

Glossary of Terms

[Glossary of Terms](#)

Surveys

[Feedback Survey](#)

[Food IQ Quiz](#)