



Beeliar Primary School

Food Allergies

'Allergy Conscious School'

At Beeliar we have several students who have severe food allergies. This is a growing issue for many schools as the incidence of food allergies in the general community has increased significantly over the last few years. The most common food allergies are peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, almonds, cashews etc), cow's milk, soy, seafood and eggs. Many children will "outgrow" their food allergies, however reactions to nuts, seeds and seafood tend to be lifelong. The symptoms of food allergy range from mild to life-threatening and anaphylaxis is the most severe form of allergic reaction.

The problem with nuts...

- Peanuts and other nuts are the most likely foods to cause anaphylaxis,
- Nuts are hard to avoid due to their widespread use,
- Nut allergies tend to persist. That is, less than 1 in 5 children will "outgrow" their nut allergy,
- Only a small amount is needed to trigger symptoms (in some cases only as much as the size of a sesame seed).

Why is it important that our school becomes allergy aware and allergy friendly?

- In Australia, more than 90% of fatal reactions to foods have occurred in children aged 5 years and older.
- Of those who have died from anaphylaxis, 90% have been allergic to nuts, the exposure was accidental and usually away from the home (including at school).
- We need to accept that food allergies *are* serious and that food allergies *can* be fatal.

What our school community's responsibility?

It basically comes down to a shared sense of *duty of care*. This means that we need to make every reasonable effort to minimise the risk of exposure to known allergens within the school environment. School staff, the parents of the student with the allergy, parents of the student's classmates, the student themselves and their peers and all have responsibilities to ensuring the risk of an allergic reaction is minimized. We also need to make sure we manage this issue in a sensitive and appropriate way.

How can we minimise the risk?

With respect to nut allergies, we would like to be a 'nut friendly' school. It is hard for us to be 'nut free' due to the widespread use of nuts, but 'nut friendly' schools, **where the school minimises the risk of exposure by removing high risk foods**, is certainly achievable. It is unreasonable to expect foods labeled "may contain traces of peanuts and/or other nuts" to be removed entirely from the school and school canteen. However, labels should be read to check that peanut/nuts (or the particular allergen that is an issue in your school) is not a listed ingredient.

Practical strategies for us all to use at Beeliar

Practical strategies which require small changes to provide a much safer environment for children at Beeliar will be encouraged. These are:

Sharing lunches

- Regular discussions with children about the importance of eating their own food and not sharing.
- Lunch supervision areas with a focus on supervision of the allergic student (it is not recommended that the allergic child be physically isolated from other children).
- **Parents not to send high risk foods to school in their child's lunch box.**

The school canteen

- Inform canteen staff of student/s with allergies and the foods to which they are allergic.
- Identify high risk foods and replace with other nutritious foods.
- Check product labels and bulk packaging materials for high risk ingredients and/or manufacturer warnings.
- Food preparation personnel (paid and voluntary) to be educated about measures necessary to prevent cross contamination during the handling preparation and serving of food.

Class parties

- Advise the parent/s of the student/s at risk of food allergies ahead of time so that they can provide suitable food.
- Inform other class members' parents of high risk foods so that these foods are avoided.

In the classroom:

- Students asked not to bring high risk foods to school in their lunch box.
- Be aware that craft items can be risk items (for example, egg cartons, milk containers, peanut butter jars).
- Choose recipes that don't contain high risk ingredients for cooking lessons.
- Consider non-food rewards.

On camp or excursion

- If students with severe allergy are participating, then high risk foods should not be taken or supplied (consistent with the risk minimisation policy in the school canteen).

General issues

- Ideally lunch for the allergic child should be prepared at home.
- Bottles, other drinks and lunch boxes should be clearly labeled with the name of the child for which they are intended.
- Encourage staff and students to wash their hands after eating.
- The students with severe allergies should wear a medic alert bracelet.