

SCHOOL HEALTH

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FOOD ALLERGIES AND ANAPHYLAXIS

Allergies are a leading reason for children missing school. Missing school means less learning. Common allergies for children are to certain foods. Foods that most commonly cause allergic reactions include nuts, shellfish, milk and eggs. Children with food allergies should avoid even tiny amounts of the substances and should not share food or snacks.

There have been several cases of schools that send letters to parents of classmates of students who have food allergies requesting that they not send in homemade treats prepared with specific allergens for class celebration. This is not a good idea - here's why.

First and foremost, most parents will not know how to decipher ingredients that contain allergens. For example, casein is another word for milk. Egg may appear on a label as albumen. Additionally, they may not understand all the ways in which cross contact between allergy-containing and allergy-free foods can occur, by simply using a shared utensil, for example.

It is a policy set forth by the Utah County Health Department (and followed by our school district) that homemade treats are not allowed in schools. Only commercially prepared food, with a pre-printed ingredient statement should be sent in to share with other students. Not only will this allow the parents of the student with the allergy to opportunity to review labels, and/or to send in an alternate treat for their child, it is also a good safety measure to avoid food borne illnesses caused by improper handling and storage of foods. It is also helpful for those students with other dietary restrictions such as diabetes.

Finally, think about how the student with allergy might feel after such a letter is sent home - they are the ones who will have to live with the consequences of such notices.

