

Picnics and barbecues

- Talk to the people in charge of the food to make sure they know about your food allergy.
- Remember that you can always bring your own food and make sure to avoid foods that you think may be unsafe.

Parties

- Some parties may not have food so your food allergy might not be an issue.
- Try to eat beforehand so you'll be less tempted to snack at the party.

How do I tell my friends about my food allergy?

Friends can be a great resource for someone with a food allergy. You don't have to tell everyone that you have a food allergy, but it is a good idea to let your closest friends know about it. Talk to them about what your food allergy is, what foods you need to avoid, and what they should do if you have an anaphylactic reaction. The more your friends understand about your food allergy, the more they can do to help you avoid an allergic reaction.

The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) started a program called Be A PAL (Protect A Life from food allergy). This program helps teach friends of people with food allergies about food allergies, how they can help prevent a reaction, and what to do if one should occur. You can find out more about Be A PAL on the FAAN teen website.

Some people tease me about my food allergy, what can I do?

All teenagers get teased at some point. Teasing can range from harmless verbal pestering to more dangerous harassment. Oftentimes a teen who doesn't realize how serious food allergies are will expose someone with a food allergy to an allergenic food as a "joke." This is not something to be taken lightly. Although it may not be easy, it is important to stand up and advocate for yourself. When it comes to teasing, your

friends can be of great help. Real friends are a good defense against peer pressure and teasing. Here are a few suggestions on how to deal with the teasers:

- Ignore them: This is usually the best approach because most teasers are simply trying to get a rise out of you. If they see that you do not react, eventually they will get bored and move on.
- Ask them to stop: This strategy usually works if it is your friend who is doing the teasing. Try to explain to them how serious your food allergy is and how you feel.
- Tell an adult such as a parent, teacher or guidance counselor: If the teasing becomes dangerous, you need to tell an adult.

FOOD ALLERGY PROGRAM

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RESOURCES

For more detailed information about food allergies, visit:

- The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (www.foodallergy.org)
- The Food Allergy Initiative (www.faiusa.org)

www.childrensnational.org

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YOUR FOOD ALLERGIES



Taking responsibility for your food allergies

Being a teenager is hard enough, but being a teenager with food allergies is even tougher! You are trying to become independent, and your parents have so many rules and limitations. Although this can be frustrating, it is important to keep in mind that no matter how responsible you are, your parents are always going to worry about you. It is a good idea to talk to your parents and work together with them to manage your food allergy. Here are some suggestions to help you take on more responsibility and gain independence:

- Show your parents you can handle small responsibilities. As they see you taking control, they will be more comfortable giving you greater independence.
- Talk to your parents about certain scenarios that may come up. Discuss possible situations and prove that you know the right steps to take. The more you plan how to avoid having an allergic reaction and what to do if one occurs, the more relaxed you and your parents will be.
- Take control of your medications. Demonstrate to your parents that you are responsible enough to remember your epinephrine every time you leave the house and that you know how to use it should you have an anaphylactic reaction.
- When you go to restaurants with your parents, practice ordering your own meal. Show them that you know the right questions to ask. This will also make you more comfortable to order meals on your own when you are out to eat with friends.

Tough Situations

Teenagers with food allergies can sometimes find themselves in challenging situations. Fun activities with friends can seem more difficult and even scary. Below are some common situations and suggestions on what to do.

Eating Out

Eating out can be a stressful experience for someone with food allergies. However, with good preparation and some practice, it can be fun and enjoyable.

- When you are out to dinner, explain to the waiter that you have a food allergy and cannot eat a certain food. Make sure that whatever dish you order does not contain the food you are allergic to. Speak to the restaurant staff clearly and directly. Ask to see ingredients if possible.
- If you're going out to dinner with a group of friends, call the restaurant ahead of time. That way you can speak with the restaurant staff and make sure they are able to accommodate you. This may be more comfortable for you than discussing your food allergy in front of everyone at the table or finding out that there is nothing at the restaurant for you to eat.
- Try to avoid risky restaurants. For example, if you have a fish or shellfish allergy, it is best to steer clear of a seafood restaurant.
- It is a good idea to carry a chef card. A chef card has a list of the foods you are allergic to and related ingredients. The chef card displays your information simply and conveys to the restaurant how serious the allergy is. It also takes the burden off you when you are out at a restaurant by allowing you to get a safe meal without calling too much attention to your allergy. Finally, the chef card can be translated into different languages when traveling.

At school

- At school, talk to your teacher about your food allergy. Set up an emergency action plan with the school nurse. Also, make sure you always know where your Benadryl and epinephrine autoinjector are.

- The more you educate people at school about your food allergy, the more they will be able to help. Learn how to advocate for yourself— it is a very important skill to develop now and will be very useful for the future!
- The lunch room can sometimes be a challenge. It is always safest to bring your own lunch. However, if you want to buy your lunch at school, ask to read the ingredient labels on cafeteria foods. It might be a good idea to do this in the morning, before school starts. Finally, make sure that the people sitting near you during lunch know about your food allergy. Your friends can be a great help in this area and can even act as a safety zone for you during meal times.

Dating with Food Allergies

Dating can be intimidating, especially with the added anxiety of having a food allergy. Here are some strategies to make dating more comfortable and enjoyable.

- Talk openly with your date about your food allergy. The earlier you let them know about your allergy, the more relaxed you will be. Plus then they can help you avoid problem foods and will know what to do if you have an anaphylactic reaction. In the beginning, it is best to keep your explanation simple.
- Let your date know what foods you can and cannot eat and what limitations that places on you and therefore him/her. For example, if you are allergic to peanuts, you have to explain to your date that he/she needs to avoid eating peanuts and wash his/her hands and brush his/her teeth if he/she has eaten peanuts before seeing you.
- Be careful with kissing. Make sure that your date understands how serious your food allergy is and what he/she has to do in order to prevent you from having a reaction. If you are not comfortable enough with your date to tell them about your food allergy, try to avoid food related activities or hold off on the kissing.