

**SHOREHAM-WADING RIVER  
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**Food Allergy Basics**

Food allergies aren't choosy

They don't affect only people with a certain color hair, people who live in certain place or people who are a certain age.

Children just like yours have food allergies. And need your help.

Most food -allergic reactions in children and teens happen when they are with their friends.

That's where you come in- by learning about food allergies, you can help allergic individuals avoid risks.

Sometimes people don't mention their food allergies to friends and adults because they are afraid of being teased.

Allergic reactions can span a wide range of symptoms. The most severe and potentially threatening reaction is *anaphylaxis*. Protocols have been developed to be used for students who are diagnosed at risk of *anaphylaxis*.

The SWR-CSD cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment for all its students with severe allergies. The goal is to minimize the risk of exposure!

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**PROTECT A LIFE  
(PAL)  
Food Allergies.**

Phone: 631.821.8100

## Food Allergy Basics

### What is a food allergy?

A food allergy involves an interaction between a food and the immune system. Although a food, such as soy, is harmless to most people, a person's immune system with food allergies misinterprets the protein in the foods as being harmful and creates antibodies to fight off that food. Each time the allergic person eats that food, the body's immune system launches an attack by releasing histamine and other powerful chemicals. The release of these chemicals causes the symptoms of an allergic reaction.

### What is the difference between food allergy and food intolerance?

Many people think that food allergy and food intolerance mean the same thing, but they do not. A food intolerance is an adverse food-induced reaction that does not involve the immune system. Lactose intolerance is one example of food intolerance. A person with lactose intolerance lacks an enzyme that is needed to digest milk sugar. When the person digests milk products, symptoms such as gas, bloating, and abdominal pain may occur. With a food allergy, the immune system identifies a food as being an enemy, and when the allergic person eats that food, the immune system tries to "fight off" the enemy. Symptoms can range from mild to severe.

### What foods cause most allergic reactions?

Six foods account for 90 percent of the allergic reactions in children—milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts (such as walnuts, pecans, almonds, and cashews), soy, and

### What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a sudden, severe allergic reaction that involves various areas of the body simultaneously. In extreme cases, it can cause death. Some people call this type of reaction a general reaction or allergic shock.

### How does someone avoid having a reaction?

Since there is no cure or preventative medication available for food allergy, avoidance of the food in question is the only way for someone with food allergies to avoid having a reaction. People with food allergies must learn the scientific and technical names for foods, read the ingredient statements on every food they eat, and avoid products that contain the offending food. Most people who have experienced food-allergic reactions, do not get the reaction from the food itself because the food itself does not contain the allergen. Cross-contact occurs when the proteins from various foods mix. Oftentimes this happens during the cooking process (for example, when a cookie sheet used to bake nut-containing cookies is then used to bake nut-free cookies without being cleaned with soap and water).

### What is it like to have a food-allergic reaction?

Some reactions are mild, and only result in hives or gastrointestinal problems (such as cramping, diarrhea, and vomiting). Other reactions are very serious, and can be life-threatening. Regardless of the level of a reaction, however, it is always scary.

Some kids get embarrassed when they realize they are having a reaction. They try to quietly take care of the situation, or hope that by ignoring it, their reaction will just go away. Others feel themselves getting sick and go to the bathroom alone, trying not to make a scene. This is very dangerous, because if the reaction progresses more quickly than expected, the allergic person could lose consciousness and be unable to help herself.

If you think a friend might be having a reaction, it's important to act quickly. Don't wait to see if the reaction will worsen. If your friend has a history of severe reactions, get help immediately (for example, call 911).