

Programming for 4-H Members with Food Allergies



HEAD



HEART



HANDS



HEALTH

What are food allergies?

Food allergies are immune system reactions soon after eating certain foods. They are especially common in children. Even a small amount of allergy-causing food can trigger signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction.

Common symptoms include:

- » Digestive problems
- » Hives or itching
- » Tingling in the mouth
- » Swelling of the lips, face, tongue, and throat
- » Wheezing, nasal congestion, or trouble breathing
- » Dizziness, lightheadedness, or fainting
- » Anaphylaxis (Life-threatening reaction making it difficult to breathe)

What are the most common food allergies?

The nine leading causes of food allergies identified by the United States Department of Agriculture are milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, soybeans, and sesame.

Snacks that avoid the nine major food allergies:

Food can be a big part of the 4-H experience as sharing snacks and meals with other 4-H youth offers a time for fellowship and unstructured social interactions. Providing allergen free snacks can be a simple way to make sure that all your 4-H youth feel belonging and included in your 4-H club/community. Here are some examples of snacks/foods you can serve that avoid the 9 most common food allergies:

- » Fresh fruit and veggies
- » Applesauce, fruit cups, and canned fruit
- » Dried or frozen fruit

- » Rice cakes
- » Popcorn
- » Sunflower Seed butter (a peanut butter substitute)
- » Sunflower or pumpkin seeds (a tree nut/peanut substitute)
- » Rice/corn cereal squares (aka Chex)
- » Corn chips and salsa (check label if store bought)

If you are unsure if a product has allergens in it, be sure to read the label as both the USDA and FDA have laws that require all ingredients to be listed.

Creating a plan for youth with allergies:

Being prepared for youth with a food allergy sometimes requires additional planning. Always have an action plan for children with food allergies. In some cases of severe food allergies, children may not be able to be in the same room with certain foods. Questions to ask of families:

- » What reactions do you experience if you are exposed?
- » Do you have an EpiPen? Where is it located?
- » What are some of the youth's favorite snacks?

Additional resources or information:

USDA Website: <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/food-safety/safe-food-handling-and-preparation/food-safety-basics/food-allergies>

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