

Greetings,

As you most likely have heard, all Marquette Area Public Schools have all become "Peanut Aware". Because it is at times unreasonable to expect a school district to be completely peanut and tree nut free, we are diligently working to educate children, staff and parents on some facts about peanut and tree nut allergies. The more we all know, the more sense it will make to all of us, to help children with these allergies to not be exposed to the allergens in their surroundings that could be life threatening.

Here are some facts of interest taken from several sources re: peanut and tree nut allergies.

Peanut allergy is the most common cause of deaths from a food allergy.

[Allergy](#) to peanuts affects 1.3% of the general population. Peanut allergy affects 7 percent of brothers and sisters of persons with the allergy.

Facts About Peanut Allergy

Peanut Allergy Prevalence

- Peanut and tree nut (pecans, walnuts, almonds, etc.) allergy can be a serious condition that affects approximately three million Americans, or 1.1 percent of the population.
- Peanuts are the leading cause of severe food allergic reactions, followed by shellfish, fish, tree nuts and eggs. (Food Allergy Network)

Peanut Allergy Characteristics

- Peanut allergy can be characterized by more severe symptoms, such as gastrointestinal, skin and respiratory symptoms, than other food allergies and by a high rate of symptoms on minimal contact. ("Clinical characteristics of peanut allergy," *Clin. Exp. Allergy* "An evaluation of the sensitivity of subjects with peanut allergy to very low doses of peanut protein," *J. Allergy Clin. Immunology*.)
- Severe sufferers also may experience potentially life-threatening anaphylactic shock in response to ingestion of peanuts. Anaphylactic shock is an allergic reaction in which the release of histamine causes swelling, difficulty in breathing, heart failure, circulatory collapse, and sometimes death.
- As many as one-third of peanut-sensitive patients have severe reactions, such as fatal and near-fatal [anaphylaxis](#). ("Anaphylactic deaths in asthmatic patients," *Allergy Proc.*)
- Avoidance of peanuts is very difficult because peanuts are commonly used as an adulterant in the preparation of foods. (Allergic reaction to inadvertent peanut contact in a child," *Allergy Asthma Proc.*)

Peanut Allergy Therapies

- There is no cure for peanut allergy and no therapies that eliminate or reduce the severity of peanut allergy. Current treatments only address the symptoms of an allergic reaction once it has taken place. (The American Peanut Council)
- Strict avoidance of peanut and peanut-ingredient is the only way to prevent an allergic reaction. (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, The American Peanut Council)

- Reactions can begin and proceed rapidly, in extreme cases proving fatal within minutes. Severe sufferers must use epinephrine (i.e., adrenaline) to help prevent anaphylactic shock. If administered in time, an injection of epinephrine may reverse the anaphylactic condition by quickly constricting blood vessels, increasing the heart rate, stopping swelling around the face and throat, and relaxing muscles in the lungs. Once administered, immediate hospital follow-up is required.

If you have a child who has a classmate with a life threatening allergy, you have most likely received a letter to help you and your children keep the child in his/her classroom safe. The biggest thing all of us can do is to help a child AVOID these life threatening situations. Remember, if your child has a classmate who has an allergy, be vigilant about sending items into the classroom to share that are homemade or made in a local bakery. We cannot ensure that the treats have not been contaminated by peanuts or tree nuts. Also, when sending in packaged treats ALWAYS check labels. They may have been processed in a factory that also manufactures items with peanuts or tree nuts. Read labels EVERY TIME because companies do change where their products are produced and the process of producing them can also change. I also ask that families consider the fact that if their child was allergic to peanuts and/or tree nuts you would want your child protected no matter what! All children are precious and worth the time for all of us to keep them safe.

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