

TIPS FOR PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING FOOD ALLERGY BULLYING

Food allergies affect 1 in 13 U.S. children – roughly two in every classroom. Sadly, about one-third of these kids have been bullied because of their allergies, and about half the time, they don't tell their parents.* Food allergy bullying can be physically dangerous, and it's associated with distress and a lower quality of life in children and their parents.

As a parent, teacher, friend or neighbor, you can help prevent and address food allergy bullying. Here's how:

- **Encourage open communication.** Be sure kids understand what bullying is and what to do if they – or a friend or classmate – are bullied. Emphasize the importance of reporting bullying to a trusted adult.
- **Teach kids the skills they need to stand up to bullies**, including saying “stop” or “leave me alone” with confidence, using humor, and walking away.
- **Recognize the signs of bullying.** These can include torn clothing or damaged books; unexplained reactions or injuries; avoiding school; physical complaints, such as headaches or stomachaches; consistent nightmares; lower grades and loss of interest in school; social isolation; and behavior changes, such as sadness or outbursts.
- **If your child is being bullied, be calm and assure him or her that you're going to help.** Don't encourage retaliation or confront the bully yourself. This can make the problem worse. Instead, talk to the appropriate personnel at your child's school or camp.
- **Encourage teachers, administrators, the school nurse, or counselors to offer educational programs about food allergies and bullying.** Talk to school or camp administrators about establishing policies and plans that protect children with food allergies and protect all children against bullying.
- **Set up a buddy system.** Encourage kids who are bullied to stay with a group of trusted friends in high-risk situations, such as at the lunchroom or while walking home from school.

For resources and more information about how you can help, visit www.foodallergy.org/its-not-a-joke.

* “Child and Parental Reports of Bullying in a Consecutive Sample of Children with Food Allergy,” Shemesh E, Annunziato RA, Ambrose MA, Ravid NL, Mullarkey C, Rubes M, Chuang K, Sicherer M, Sicherer SH. *Pediatrics*. 2013 Jan;131(1):e10-7. doi: 10.1542/peds.2012-1180. Epub 2012 Dec 24.