



My Classmate Has a Food Allergy. What Can I Do to Help?

Did you know that 1 in 13 children in the United States has a food allergy? That's about two students in every classroom. Because food allergies affect so many kids, it is good to learn how to be a friend to a classmate with food allergies.

Students, both with allergies and without, can follow these recommendations to help their friends and classmates feel supported and safe.

Know that food allergies are serious. It's hard to believe that foods you eat every day can hurt others, but it's true! If someone with a food allergy eats something they are allergic to, they can get very sick and sometimes have to go to the hospital. If a friend or classmate has a food allergy, don't tease, bully or make fun of them. Tell an adult right away if you see other kids picking on someone with a food allergy.

Learn about your classmate's allergy. Find out which foods your friend is allergic to and what to do in case of an emergency. Ask about their symptoms and what to expect if they are having an allergic reaction. Many symptoms happen right away – hives, a rash, stomach pain, itchy mouth. Other symptoms can take longer to show up. Be aware of any medication that your classmate may need to treat an allergic reaction and where it is kept. The more you learn about your friend's allergy, the more you will be able to support them.

Never share food with classmates who have food allergies. You can share jokes and laughs with your classmates with food allergies, but don't share food. For students with food allergies, sharing food can be very dangerous. So don't offer friends with food allergies anything from your lunch or snack. Why? Because it may have something in it that could make them very sick or hurt them.

Wash your hands after eating. Washing your hands with soap and water after you eat is very important. It's a good way to clean off any food that is on your hands. Hand sanitizers and wipes don't get rid of all the allergens. Hand wipes aren't as good as soap and water, but they work better than hand sanitizer.

Help all of your friends and classmates have fun together! There are lots of ways to have fun without food! Listening to music, playing board or video games, making crafts, going for a bike ride, and playing sports are just some of the cool things you can do together. This way, everyone stays safe and has fun!

Get help immediately if a classmate with food allergies becomes ill. If your classmate feels sick or thinks they may have eaten something they are allergic to, tell an adult right away or dial 911! They will make sure your friend gets help and gets the medicine they need to feel better.

