

# Let's Celebrate! Guide to Special Occasions

get schooled in  
**ANAPHYLAXIS**

From picnics and pool parties to annual traditions like trick-or-treating and holiday parties, special occasions can play host to a number of allergens that can cause anaphylaxis, a life-threatening allergic reaction, in certain children. Avoidance of those allergic triggers is the critical first step in managing potentially life-threatening (severe) allergies, but allergens are not always obvious, and accidental exposure may still happen.

Participating in special occasions can often be overwhelming and stressful for a child with severe allergies and for their parents or caregivers, friends and party chaperones. The good news is that, with a little planning ahead, parties and other special occasions don't have to be something to dread.

Below are some simple steps that you can take to help you be ready for stress-free special occasions.

## Get Informed!

Be well-versed on your child's severe allergy. Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening allergic reaction that happens when someone comes into contact with a food or other trigger that they are allergic to. Some of the most common items that can cause this type of a reaction include foods like cow's milk, eggs and peanuts; insect stings; some medications; and latex (like in balloons or gloves used for cleaning or serving food).

## Plan Ahead!

One of the best ways to help ensure your staff, students and their families are properly educated about severe allergies is to develop a comprehensive policy or set of guidelines that can be shared with everyone for the management of severe allergies. This policy should cover school settings, as well as school-associated settings, such as field trips and extracurricular activity facilities. The policy should be developed with input from a wide array of experienced professionals, including school administrators, licensed healthcare professionals, teachers, students and families. A comprehensive policy addresses the following essential components:

- ★ Alert the party host to a child's severe allergies ahead of time and offer to provide food that is safe for the child to eat
- ★ Encourage children to speak up and inform friends and party chaperones about their severe allergies, triggers that they need to avoid, how to recognize the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and when they should get an adult in case of an emergency
- ★ Make sure other adults (e.g., parents, party hosts, babysitters) are aware of your child's severe allergy
- ★ Offer to chaperone at the event and keep a close eye on potential allergic triggers. Plus, the host will appreciate the extra adult help!
- ★ Don't let children share food or drinks with friends
- ★ Tell children to wash their hands well with soap and water, before and after eating and playing
- ★ Try not to make the child feel different than the other children and work with the party host to organize activities that allow them to join in
- ★ Be on the lookout for stinging or biting insects and places where they gather (e.g., beehives, fire ant farms) if an event takes place outside
- ★ Remind a child not to wander off if they suspect symptoms are beginning
- ★ Ensure that the child has an anaphylaxis action plan that has been reviewed with the parents and a healthcare professional
- ★ Make sure that parents, caregivers and/or the child with severe allergies have epinephrine on hand for response to anaphylaxis

## Celebrate!

The Get Schooled in Anaphylaxis initiative offers practical information to educate the school community to help those at risk for life-threatening allergic reactions avoid their triggers, recognize anaphylaxis signs and symptoms and understand how to quickly get appropriate treatment and immediate medical care when anaphylaxis occurs.

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