

## Food allergies at Rockwell (2009-2010):

- peanuts
- tree nuts (walnuts, pecans, almonds, cashews, etc.)
- milk/dairy
- eggs
- wheat
- soy
- seeds
- chocolate
- raw fruit/vegetables
- shellfish (teacher, no students)



Note: There are also children with dietary restrictions for reasons other than food allergies (for example: food/additives intolerances, celiac/gluten-free diet, diabetes, vegetarian).

## Food Allergy Basics

The most common allergy-causing foods in the U.S. are peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, wheat, and soy. Recent studies showed that 3.3 million Americans are allergic to peanuts or tree nuts, and 6.9 million are allergic to seafood. This year Rockwell has 20 kids with severe food allergies (roughly 1 in every 26 kids). There are 18 primary kids (grades K-3) and 2 intermediate kids (grades 4-6). In the lower grades, there are often several children in a class who have food allergies.

Strictly avoiding the food that triggers the allergy is the only way to prevent a reaction. All the children at Rockwell must ingest the foods to experience a medical emergency, but even a trace amount can cause a strong reaction that requires a trip to the emergency room. Touching a food may cause rashes or swelling.

## Tips for Celebrations

***Remember to ask the teacher(s) what food allergies and/or other dietary restrictions you need to be aware of. Teachers have lists of their students impacted.***

To avoid serving allergenic foods, check all food labels carefully for **Ingredients** and **Allergy Warnings**. For example: “contains X”, “may contain X”, “shared equipment with X”, and “made in a facility with X”.

With attention to detail, you can help keep kids with food allergies safe and include them in the fun too. The following ideas have worked for many families and teachers:

- Some teachers establish a rule that foods provided for parties must have ingredient labels so the teacher and students can identify the presence of allergens.
- Recipes are available that are made without peanuts/tree nuts/milk/egg. However, these are best prepared by an allergy family. *It is easy to make an accidental cross-contamination mistake!*
- Parents of the food-allergic children in the classroom can share their ideas for favorite safe treats.
- Fresh fruit and vegetables (grapes, apple slices, bananas, carrot sticks) are almost always safe.
- Let parents know when a celebration is coming up, and what will be served, such as cupcakes, cookies, etc., so that they can provide a similar safe treat for their child for the party, if necessary.
- Often parents of the food-allergic children can bake cupcakes, cookies, etc. to share with the class (works well for peanut-free/nut-free families). However, beware if there are several children with different food allergies in the class (such as milk or eggs as well as peanuts/nuts).
- I believe PCC can locate bakeries that specialize in allergy-safe baked goods.
- Limit the number of food items in the classroom. The class might play a favorite game, do a craft, sing songs, or watch a movie along with a simple snack, rather than having an elaborate “feast”.

## Additional Resources

The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN)

[www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

FAAN Food Allergy Website for Kids

[www.faankids.org](http://www.faankids.org)

Book “Understanding and Managing Your Child’s Food Allergies” by Scott H. Sicherer (2006)

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