

Peanut products in our school cafeterias

Peanut butter is a nutritious food that kids love. It is a **good source of protein with heart-healthy unsaturated fat that keeps children full and ready to learn**. Peanut butter also fits well with food trends such as vegetarian meals and plant-based proteins.

What's the latest research?

Food allergies affect 5 percent of children and 4 percent of teens and adults. Less than 1 percent of Americans have a peanut allergy. Peanut allergies are not the most common, but they are among the top recognized food allergens and can be serious and sometimes life-threatening, so should not be taken lightly.



We once thought that banning peanuts in schools would decrease food reactions. As a result, it was common practice to not serve peanut products from the cafeteria. However, research is ever-evolving with nutrition and allergies, and it now shows that banning peanuts from the cafeteria does not reduce the frequency of epinephrine use (allergic reactions). **A peanut ban gives parents and school staff a false sense of security and is not recommended, especially because we still allow students who pack their lunch to bring in peanut products.**

Considering the small number of students allergic to peanuts, banning just the one allergen (peanuts) is not the best approach to allergy management in our schools. We know the world we live in is not peanut-free so banning peanuts from the school cafeteria does not properly prepare students for the real world. **A plan that encompasses allergy awareness is a more effective policy.**



How do you safely serve peanut products?

Knox County Schools cafeterias will only use pre-packaged clearly labeled peanut products so there is no risk of cross contamination from the kitchen. This change will get us up-to-date within research guidelines and mirror other school systems in the country who do not have a peanut ban across their system. Soy butter sandwiches and other cereals are safe alternative for students with peanut allergies and will always be available.



Best practices

- Conduct annual food allergy training for staff.
- Avoid food sharing. Teach children that peanut products can make other students sick so they should not share.
- Offer an allergy-free table for students in the cafeteria.
- Always practice good hand washing.

It is the responsibility of parents to have their child's medical provider to fill out the FSD-49 Medical Request Form and turn into the school if their child has a food allergy and would like to be accommodated by the cafeteria. An alert will be placed on the child's account so that when they go through the line, the register will alert the cashier of any allergies.

KCS | KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS
Medical Request for Meal Modification

Student Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____ SS # _____
Grade Level: _____

Parents who are unable to attend must be notified. School administrators must be notified of any medical needs as indicated on this form. The school nurse should be notified of any medical needs as indicated on this form. The school nurse should be notified of any medical needs as indicated on this form. The school nurse should be notified of any medical needs as indicated on this form.

Section A. Food Allergy Allergens
 Milk Eggs Soy Wheat Fish Shellfish Tree Nuts Peanuts
 Other: _____
 No allergies
 Other: _____

Section B. Intolerance/Modification
 Lactose Intolerance Gluten Intolerance Other: _____
 Other: _____

Section C. Therapeutic Diet Order: (see school nurse appointment)
 Therapeutic Diet Order Other: _____

Section D. Immunization Documentation
 Immunization Documentation Other: _____

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Our goal is to provide nutritious options for all students while being mindful of food allergy reactions, promoting allergy awareness and dispelling common myths to clear up allergy confusion. Together we can safely reintroduce pre-packaged peanut products from our cafeterias as a delicious meal option for our students.