

# ABOUT BEING A PEANUT & NUT FREE SCHOOL

*Wakefield Elementary School  
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**Wakefield Elementary School** is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment for students through a co-operative effort by staff, parents, students, school and related agencies. It works hard to fulfill this objective within the limits of existing legislation and available resources and, most importantly, your help.

## Focus on High Risk Students

For a select few of our students, an exposure to certain allergens such as foods, insect bites and some medications can be life-threatening. In the case of food allergies, exposure to even a trace amount can elicit a reaction.

With the incidence of food allergies for children on the rise and given the potential fatal consequences, the school believes it is important to ensure that these students are provided - to the extent possible - a safe environment in which to learn and grow.

To support this, the school established its "**Management of Life Threatening Allergies Policy**" (2007) and has been working to support a "nut and peanut free" environment for all its staff, teachers and students.

## Why Just Peanut and Nut Free?

While a number of students have sensitivities and allergic reactions to a number of foods, the school felt it important to address the food allergens most likely to bring on a potentially fatal reaction.

Currently, there are ten common food allergies: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, wheat, soy, sulphites and (a recent addition) sesame. Of these, the peanut allergy is the most common cause of fatal anaphylaxis (63% of 32 fatalities in one registry). A student can have a reaction with as little as 0.1 mg of an ingested peanut (1/8000<sup>th</sup> of a peanut). Tree nuts such as almonds, hazelnuts, pecans, walnuts, pine nuts, etc. can also elicit an anaphylactic shock reaction.

In addition, physicians cannot safely determine which patients may be at risk for a mild or moderate allergic reaction and which patients might go on to develop a severe or potentially fatal allergic reaction. Past reactions are also not predictors of the severity of future ones. All this leads us to a commitment to a healthy dose of caution and cooperation from staff, teachers, parents and students.

## What the School Does

While it is impossible to be 100% “peanut and nut free”, the school has taken the following measures to help safeguard its students:

- Ensuring staff, teachers, lunch time supervisors, and daycare personnel are trained to recognize allergic and anaphylactic reactions and administer the appropriate response.
- Conducting age appropriate information sessions for students to make them aware of the serious nature of these allergic reactions. This helps them prevent problems and assist students who may be having a reaction.
- Ensuring that field trip procedures take into account students at high risk.
- Inviting a parent of an anaphylaxis child to participate in an advisory capacity on Governing Board to ensure that policies, procedures and upcoming events take into consideration high-risk students.
- Providing a list of helpful resources to help parents of non-anaphylactic children to support this policy (e.g., info sheet on reading labels, a list of suggested “safe snacks”, etc.). See PPO Bulletin Board across from the principal’s office.

## What the Families of Anaphylactic Students Do

The student and his or her family play a central role in this including:

- Informing the principal, in writing, prior to the first day of classes of their child’s allergy. (Providing a doctor’s letter is recommended).
- Completing the Medical Information Form provided by the school which outlines the doctor’s recommended emergency treatment plan for your child.
- Meeting with the teacher during the first week of classes to confirm the emergency plan.

- On or before the first day of school, providing a sufficient number of EPI-Pens (at least two) for the school to keep in a secured and accessible location or if your child can carry his or her own informing the school that he or she is doing so.
- If your child is old enough, have him or her wear a Medic Alert bracelet.
- Ensuring your child is knowledgeable about food avoidance practices (e.g., no sharing food, wash hands before and after, eating on top of a clean surface – especially when going on field trips.)

## What We Ask of All Parents and Students

It is in everyone’s interest to keep each other safe and healthy, whether it is from a food allergy or insect bite or from discrimination or bullying. Hence, we ask that parents ensure that their children bring only “safe snacks” (i.e. no nuts or peanut products even those with trace amounts) to school and help answer their questions about why it is important to do so.

## If You Need More Information

If the above information has not answered your questions about why our school works towards being a “peanut and nut free”, then I encourage you to contact us.

You may also wish to check out:

- Wakefield School’s “Management of Life Threatening Allergies Policy” (2007)
- Anaphylactic Shock Policy Statement – WQSB (December 19, 2006)
- Anaphylaxis Canada ([www.anaphylaxis.org](http://www.anaphylaxis.org))
- Health Canada’s Information about Food Allergies and Intolerances (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/allerg/index-eng.php>)
- Resources posted on the PPO Bulletin Board.