

## **GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING FOOD ALLERGIES AT CAMP**

Food allergies can be life-threatening. In any camp setting: day camps, residential camps, sports camps, or travel camps the risk of accidental exposure to a food allergen is present. Camp staff, physicians, parents, and campers themselves must work together to minimize the risk. There must also be medications and procedures in place to deal with accidental ingestion or contact.

### **FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY**

#### **Choose an appropriate camp for the child. Find out the following:**

- Who is the primary healthcare person and what are their credentials?
- Who is responsible for their duties in this person's absence?
- How does camp communicate and monitor food allergy information? Is this sufficient for your child?
- How far is the camp from a medical treatment center?
- What trips might the camper take that change the response time?
- Do travel personnel have sufficient medication to provide a margin of safety?
- What limits a camp's ability to care for your child?

#### **Notify the camp of the camper's allergies or suspected allergies.**

- Use the camp application and/or health form to fully describe the allergy. Use the FARE Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan, available at [www.foodallergy.org/downloads](http://www.foodallergy.org/downloads).
- List foods to which the camper is allergic, and the specific symptoms of the child's typical allergic reaction.
- Inform the camp director of the allergy early in the process so that appropriate personnel can be hired or instructed on proper approach to the camper with food allergy.

#### **Make personal contact with the director, counselor, or the division supervisor before the camper's arrival at the facility.**

- Make certain that the camp director notifies all affected personnel. Life guards, transportation drivers, dining hall/cafeteria workers, camp nurses, counselors, specialty area workers, and anyone else who may offer food or plan parties or events all need to be informed of the allergy.

- Additionally, camps may use volunteers who may only come to camp one or two days during the week. These individuals will also need to understand the camp's food allergy policy.

#### **Provide the camp with a recent photo of the child, attached to written instructions, medical documentation, and medications as prescribed by the physician for managing an allergic reaction.**

- *Do not simply transfer school documentation; camp is different from school.*
- The specific camp personnel need to be authorized and instructed on how to proceed.
- The camp may have an Allergy Action Plan, OR use the FARE Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan.

#### **Check the expiration date of all medications.**

- Be prepared to replace any expired or unsealed, previously used medication. Review with camp director and nurse the location and storage of medications. Given the remote location of many camps, provide an adequate supply of epinephrine, if prescribed.

#### **Educate and review often with the camper the self management of his or her food allergy.**

- Camper should know:
  - Safe and unsafe foods
  - Strategies for avoiding exposure to unsafe foods
  - Symptoms of allergic reactions
  - How and when to tell an adult about a possible allergic response
  - How to read a food label (e.g. at the camp candy store), if age appropriate. For young campers, plan with camp how to handle this.
  - How to use epinephrine.

## **CAMPER RESPONSIBILITY**

Camper should:

- NEVER trade food with other campers.
- Not eat anything with unknown ingredients.
- Read every label and check with a counselor (if age appropriate).
- Be proactive in the management of mild reactions, such as seeking help if a reaction is suspected
- Tell an adult if a reaction seems to be starting, even if there is no visible appearance of allergic response.
- NOT go off alone if symptoms are beginning.

## **CAMP RESPONSIBILITY**

**Be informed of the availability of emergency care.**

- Know: How to contact EMT/ambulance
  - How much time is needed for an emergency crew to arrive
  - How far it is to the nearest hospital
  - If the hospital has an M.D. present at all times.
- Camps located in non-urban settings must understand that rural ambulance and emergency crews may be volunteers. Therefore, additional plans and additional medications may be required.
- On trips away from the campsite, a communication device (i.e., cell phone, 2-way radio) should be carried.

**Review the health records submitted by parents and physicians.**

**Establish prevention protocols for your camp.**

- Make plans so that the camper with food allergies may be safely included in all activities.
- Be certain that all food service or kitchen personnel are aware of, and can identify the child with food allergies.
- Discuss meal plans with parents/camper and alternative plans if necessary.
- Plan how a camper with food allergies will participate in meals. For example, a camper with food allergies might go first in a buffet line and other food-related events to avoid cross-contact, or might need a place to sit apart in a special allergen-free space.

**Assure that all who will be in contact with camper know of the allergy, can recognize the symptoms of an allergic reaction, and know what action to take if a reaction occurs.**

**Maintain an appropriate sense of confidentiality and respect for individual privacy.**

**Identify the camp core emergency response team.** This should include, but not be limited to appropriate staff.

- Arrange to have this team meet with parents and camper prior to the opening activity, on or before the first day of camper's participation.
- Assure that the nurse has the required authorizations and appropriate medications to use in the event of unintentional contact.

**Assure that appropriate personnel are familiar with the use of epinephrine, where medication is located, and the protocol.**

- Arrange a training session before the start of camp. Allow participants to become familiar with the usage of epinephrine auto-injectors.
- Be in compliance with local and state regulations regarding the administration of medication.

**If there are planned field trips or out of camp activities:**

- Be certain any emergency medications and authorizations accompany the camper and the counselor.
- Be certain there is a way to contact emergency assistance.

**Medications must be stored at the correct temperature range. Be certain travel personnel understand the importance of this. Some medications become ineffective if exposed to temperature extremes (heat or cold).**

- Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for proper storage.

*These guidelines were developed with input from the following:*

*- Helen Rebull, R.N., Congressional Schools of Virginia*

*- Association of Camp Nurses*

*- Food Allergy Research & Education*