

Nutrition Services Staff



At work, you come into contact with students who have asthma and/or anaphylaxis. Thus, it is essential for you to understand how certain common foods, like peanuts, eggs and milk; pests like cockroaches and rodents; and even latex gloves can start a severe asthma episode or allergic reaction. Learn what you can do to help protect students with asthma and anaphylaxis and to be prepared in case of an emergency.

Action Checklist for Nutrition Services Staff

Nutrition services staff need to be aware that certain foods, pests (e.g., cockroaches) and other substances can cause a life-threatening systemic allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) or asthma attack. While someone can have an allergic reaction to food and not have asthma, and not all asthma episodes are caused by allergies, it also is true that approximately 6%–8% of children who have asthma have food allergies that can cause severe breathing problems.

- Work with the school nurse to set up an emergency plan for caring for a student who has asthma and/or anaphylaxis.**
- Recognize the symptoms of asthma, food allergies, and anaphylaxis and seek medical attention immediately.** Acting quickly can save lives!
- Familiarize yourself with school district and FDA requirements** for food preparation, maintenance, and integrated pest management policies.
- Control pests (cockroaches, mice, rats, ants, etc.)** Pests in schools are a concern because they may spread disease, their droppings can trigger asthma, and they cause damage to school buildings and property.
 - To discourage pests, store food in sealed containers; sweep and wet mop floors daily to remove food; clean stoves and ovens after every use; wipe counters clean with soap and water or a disinfectant; remove trash daily; fix moisture problems; dispose of food, contaminated paper and plastic products in covered containers; place dumpsters away from the building; and remove clutter.
 - Work with the school maintenance staff to evaluate and repair/clean up areas that may allow pest infiltration. Cleaning supplies should be evaluated for potential allergen-causing chemical substances and to make sure they meet FDA requirements for use in schools.
- Carefully read labels for hidden ingredients that may appear harmless.** Nutrition services staff should be aware of FDA requirements for additive and ingredient labeling. Note that some spices and colorings may not actually be labeled yet still be present in a food product. These types of omissions could potentially expose a student to a product or additive to which they may be allergic. Read labels carefully and if you are unsure what a product actually contains, seek clarification of information.
- Talk with teachers about students who need to avoid certain foods and plan (when possible) healthy alternatives for those students.**
- Respect confidentiality and privacy** when students who have asthma and allergies are identified.