

What is a “Nut-Free” School?

Nationally, a majority of schools have one or more children with known food allergies, and a significant percentage of children with food allergies have been accidentally exposed to a food allergen while at school.

¹ Allergic reactions can be life-threatening and have far-reaching effects on children and their families, as well as on the schools they attend.² Because no treatment exists to prevent reactions to food allergies or anaphylaxis, strict avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction.³

Saint Mary Magdalene is committed to offering a safe educational environment for all students, including students with food allergies, by working cooperatively with parents, students, and staff to minimize the risks of accidental exposure to a food allergen while at school. Because the severity of a previous reaction is no indication of future severity, St. Mary Magdalene assumes that all children with food allergies are at risk of developing a severe, life-threatening reaction with any exposure.⁴ **Accordingly, St. Mary Magdalene prohibits parents, students, and staff from bringing any food item to school, including field trips and other school-sponsored events, that contains peanuts or tree nuts, or that, according to its label “may include peanuts or tree nuts.”** Foods that do not contain these labels generally are considered safe to bring to school; however, if the food is not labeled, parents, students, and staff should avoid bringing the food to school and, if the food is at school, staff should not give the food to any child with a food allergy and should minimize the potential of an airborne exposure.⁵

Should food labeled as containing or may contain peanuts or tree nuts, inadvertently be brought to school, the food will be sent home unopened with a note indicating that the food item contains nuts and is not allowed at school. Parents should understand that the implementation of a “nut-free” policy does not necessarily mean that there will never be food with nuts in the school setting, given that St. Mary Magdalene does not control all food items coming into the facility. Despite the “nut-free” policy, the school makes no guarantee that the premises will be completely nut-free. The school disclaims any liability for violations of the “nut-free” policy. Due to the risk of an inadvertent exposure, it is important that parents of students with allergies complete the mandatory Allergy Action Plan form and return it to the School Office.

By working in partnership with students, parents, staff, and school health professionals to (a) remove foods with nuts from the school setting, (b) educate students, parents, and staff on the prevalence and severity of food allergies, and (c) understand the symptoms related to exposure and respond swiftly and decisively to address incidental exposures, St. Mary Magdalene seeks to create a safe educational environment that minimizes the risks of inadvertent exposure and negative health consequences for students with food allergies.

Requirements for the Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

1. The parent/guardian shall complete and return the Allergy Action Plan detailing the presence of a food allergy that the child has and how the child reacts to the allergen(s).
2. The parent/guardian shall provide the necessary antihistamine and EpiPen for the student’s self-carrying, only after an individual assessment of the student’s ability to properly administer medication, or to the health aide for administration.
3. The parent/guardian shall provide or attain training for their child’s knowledge of recognizing symptoms of peanut/tree nut exposure, thoroughly washing hands, reading labels, and self-administering of antihistamine and EpiPen.
4. The parent/guardian is responsible for the student’s health care and medical care during all activities, events, or functions.

Goals for the student with a Peanut/Tree Nut Allergy

1. The student should not eat or drink anything given to them by another school mate.
2. The student should not eat or drink anything with unknown ingredients or known to contain any allergen.
3. Depending on developmental level, the student should be proactive in the care and management of their food allergies and reactions.
4. The student should communicate immediately with teachers, administrators, or other adults in charge of symptoms, reactions, exposure, etc.

For more information on food allergies, how to read food labels, and safe snacks for school please visit:

- FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education): www.foodallergy.org
- “Snack Safely” provides a safe snack guide that is updated frequently at www.snacksafely.com/snack-guide. Click the green tab to view the guide.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs.” Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services; 2013.

² Id.

³ Id.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Federal law requires food labels in the United States to clearly identify food allergens and ingredients that are, or contain any protein derived from, common food allergens such as peanuts and tree nuts. Id.