

News Notes To Parents

Purdue University Cooperative Extension Service of Wells County

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School Food Options for Kids with Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy, intolerance, or sensitivity, it's important to work closely with your school's foodservice and nutrition staff, who often include registered dietitian nutritionists. According to Wesley Delbridge, RDN, from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and a school food and nutrition director in Arizona, the best approach is a team effort involving the child, parents, and healthcare provider. Effective communication helps ensure everyone understands the specifics of each food allergy and helps create appealing and safe menu options.



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Meeting with School Staff

Arrange a visit to meet the cafeteria manager and ensure the staff knows your child and is aware of problematic foods or ingredients. It's helpful to identify a go-to person your child can ask about food safety. After establishing contact with the foodservice department, get a copy of the monthly menu and review it with your child to identify acceptable options. Don't hesitate to ask for ingredient lists and recipes for scratch-made items. Schools should provide accurate labels and ingredient information, which can be helpful for parents and students when choosing safe foods.

Peanut Allergies

Peanut allergies are becoming more common, with cases in children tripling in the U.S. between 1997 and 2008. While many schools avoid peanuts, not all do, so it's crucial to ask about potential sources of peanuts in school meals. Peanuts and peanut products can be hidden in sauces, dressings, and various dishes from global

cuisines. Some schools offer a peanut butter substitute made from sunflower seeds, which can be a safer alternative.

Gluten-Free Options

For children with celiac disease or gluten intolerance, it's important to avoid gluten, a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye. Foods like bread, pasta, and breaded items often contain gluten, but cross-contamination from utensils and processed foods can also pose a risk. Delbridge advises that all labels be checked in advance and that separate kitchen tools be used for gluten-free foods. Many naturally gluten-free options are available, such as fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, lentils, eggs, and unflavored milk. You might also request gluten-free bread or use corn tortillas as alternatives.



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Key Takeaways

It's vital to engage in proactive communication with both your child and the school staff to create a safe and inclusive eating environment. Focus on identifying what is safe for your child to eat and making them feel comfortable with their food choices.

Source: eatright.org, adapted using ChatGPT-4 Open AI

5 Play Tips for Preschool Age Children

1. **Exercise imagination like a muscle**—As with any skill, practice pays off. And having the right equipment helps. Make sure your kids have easy access to open-ended toys and everyday objects that they can play with in a variety of ways. Screens and devices can be distracting while playing with your children, so keep them out of reach.
2. **Make space for creativity**—Have an area where kids can be creative, feel comfortable experimenting, and even get messy. Provide a variety of different supplies. Crayons, markers, paints, paper, fabrics, glue, stickers, yarn, pipe cleaners and old catalogs or magazines for collages are all good. For extra fun, place some random art supplies and crafting materials in a box. Have kids close their eyes and pick out 3 to 5 items to assemble them into a work of art.
3. **Praise the creative effort**—Children learn their self-worth and self-esteem through interactions with parents and caregivers, among others. Be generous and positive in talking about your child's creative ideas. Focus on praising their efforts rather than how well the work lives up to a certain standard.
4. **Think exploration & observation**—Activities like hide-and-seek or a scavenger hunt build observation and attention skills. Draw or take photos of places where you'll hide some treats, toys or other items to find: behind a chair, under a blanket, next to a tree. For older preschoolers, you may use sight words for clues. Try themed hunts, like a Halloween scavenger "haunt." Make it spooky by turning out the lights and using flashlights.
5. **Involve the senses**—Fine-tuning gross motor skills involves the senses. Try activities that get kids using several senses at once. Examples: balancing on one foot while tossing and catching a soft ball to the beat of a song they sing! These kinds of activities can also help your child get the exercise they need to thrive. Preschool-age children need at least 3 hours of physical activity every day, or about 15 minutes every hour they are awake.



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Source: healthychildren.org

Alfredo Bagel Bites

Alfredo sauce gets a makeover with cauliflower and Greek yogurt in this recipe that works as a snack or lunch.

Ingredients

- 6 100% whole-wheat mini-bagels
- 3 cups (3 ounces) fresh cauliflower florets
- ¼ cup fat-free Greek yogurt
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1¾ cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese, divided



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Directions

Before you begin: Wash your hands.

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Arrange bagel halves, insides facing up on sheet.
3. Steam cauliflower for 3 minutes in large microwave safe bowl.
4. Transfer steamed cauliflower to a blender. Add yogurt, salt, garlic and ¼ cup mozzarella. Puree until smooth.
5. Spread cauliflower-yogurt Alfredo sauce evenly on bagels. Top with remaining cheese.
6. Bake 15 minutes until tops are golden. Allow to cool for at least 5 minutes before serving.

Source: eatright.org

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