

McEachern Memorial United Methodist Church

Allergy Issues and Policy

Life threatening allergies to certain food products such as peanuts and dairy items pose a certain dilemma for programs that serve large numbers of children. We have designed our allergy policy to be flexible and hopefully meet the needs of all children attending the programs.

Our approach to food allergies is to highlight those children with allergies. If they bring their lunch, their lunch boxes are identified with a special alert band listing their particular allergens. Our church nursery and children's ministry functions ask parents to place a wrist band on the child identifying their allergy. Our nursery ministry provides all snacks to children; therefore, please do not send food other than infant needs. The ingredients for all snacks provided are posted on the boards outside of the classrooms. We request that children Kindergarten and under refrain from bringing any peanut related snack and foods. We prefer children 1st grade and up to refrain from bringing any peanut related foods as well. However, if it is necessary we will keep the children with any peanut products at a separate table. For example, a child with an allergy to peanuts will not sit at the same table for lunch with a child who has the product as part of their meal. For those programs in which the snack is provided for the child by the program, the snacks are peanut/nut free. Accommodations are also made for children who have allergies to dairy, wheat or other commonly identified allergens. No child is allowed to leave the table until all hands and faces have been washed and lunch items have been removed.

Severe allergies, those which require the use of epi-pens or antihistamine products, present a special challenge that is addressed on a case by case basis. All of our programs use "shared" space; therefore, we cannot guarantee that products that pose life-threatening risks such as peanuts, dairy products, etc... have not been in the classrooms. However, we make every effort to minimize such risks, with appropriate cleaning practices, limiting access to the classroom space and establishing standardized guidelines for all church activities. Further, a program or individual class reserves the right to limit the use of allergen products in the classroom in the event that a child with severe allergies is part of that group. With appropriate documentation from the affected child's physician, we simply request in writing that those products not be part of any child's lunch/snack for that class. We have found that parents are more than willing to make adjustments for the health and safety of their child's classmates.

If your child has an allergy to certain foods, insect bites, etc. which necessitate the use of an antihistamine medication, an epi-pen or other medication, please have the "Food Allergy Action Form" completed by your child's physician and return it to the program director to be kept on record in both the classroom and the program office.