

## Including Girls with Food Allergies

Inclusion of ALL girls has always been, and will continue to be, a top priority in Girl Scouts. This means ensuring that girls with food allergies feel safe and included in troops/groups, activities, and programs. Food allergies can be life threatening. While various allergies affect children differently, there are actions and responsibilities that leaders/volunteers, parents/guardians, and even girls can take to minimize risks and provide a safe environment.

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### Leader/Volunteer's Responsibilities:

- Maintain a general knowledge about food allergies, specifically those that account for the majority (90%) of allergic reactions in children. These include: milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, gluten, soy, and wheat.
- Review the health records submitted by parents/guardians and discuss with them to gain more specific allergy information. This includes learning the degree to which reactions occur and the specific symptoms the girl experiences.
- Consult with parents/guardians to develop a Food Allergy Action Plan to address how the girls' health and safety needs will be met while participating in Girl Scout activities. Plan should include specific instructions for what to do in a medical emergency. Review throughout the year to assure the efficiency/effectiveness of the plan.
- Ensure that cookware, bakeware, plates and other items that may come in contact with a product a girl is allergic to are cleaned properly.
- Modify/make reasonable accommodations\* to ensure inclusion of the girl, including revising snack options to meet her needs.
- Ensure that if the girl has an inhaler or EpiPen, these remain with her for quick access.
- Beware of cross contamination. For example: Do not use the same utensils for different products (a knife in peanut butter, then dipped into the jelly jar).
- Inform all necessary parties of the girl's health needs. This includes co-leaders, those developing and carrying out activities, and those purchasing supplies.

\*A *reasonable accommodation* is adapting the activity/program so that a person with a disability/allergy is able to enjoy her or his opportunities equally.

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### Family's Responsibilities:

- Notify the leaders/volunteers of the girl's allergies.
- Provide appropriate, up-to-date emergency contact information on health forms.
- Work with the leaders/volunteers to develop and implement a plan that accommodates the girl's needs throughout troop/group meetings/events.
- Provide any necessary medical documentation, instructions, and medications as directed by a physician. Medications must be properly labeled and in their original container. Replace medications after use or upon expiration.
- Be willing to go on trips or events if possible and if requested.
- Educate the girl in the self-management of her food allergy, including
  - Safe and unsafe foods
  - Strategies for avoiding exposure to unsafe foods
  - Symptoms of allergic reactions
  - How and when to tell an adult she may be having an allergy-related problem.
  - How to read food labels (when age appropriate).
  - How to self-administer her inhaler or EpiPen
- Continually keep in mind that Girl Scouts is the girl's experience, and the goal is for her to feel safe, not isolated.

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**Girl's Responsibilities:**

- Do NOT trade food with others.
- Do NOT eat anything with unknown ingredients or known to contain any allergen.
- Wash hands before and after eating.
- Notify an adult immediately if she eats something she believes may contain the food to which she's allergic.
- Do what she can to care for and manage her food allergies and reactions based on her developmental level.

\*Excerpts referenced from the Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network's (FAAN) "School Guidelines for Managing Students with Food Allergies," [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org) and the Connecticut State Department of Education "Guidelines for Managing Life-Threatening Food Allergies in Connecticut Schools" [http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/publications/food\\_allergies/food\\_allergies.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/publications/food_allergies/food_allergies.pdf).