



Fort Carson-MEDDAC News

Keeping food allergies in control

By Christine Levy, Nutrition Care Division dietitian

There are approximately two children in every classroom (1 in 13 children under age 18) affected by food allergies. The growing incidence and awareness has prompted the creation of many initiatives to prevent allergic reactions, and promote safe environments for our children.

Evans Army Community Hospital wants to increase awareness of the incidence of food allergies and opportunities to keep the areas around you and your children safe for those who have allergies.

Many schools have proactively addressed this issue with education programs for staff, parents and students, monitoring, and safety initiatives. The school nurse, staff member or parent champion can have an impact on how well an allergy policy is disseminated and monitored for compliance. Because of a state law that was passed in 2009, Colorado schools are now required to accommodate children with food allergies. If your child has food allergies, you check with your school district's policies and procedures regarding food allergies.

There is currently a bill under consideration focused on providing additional safeguards for children with allergies; specifically that it would allow schools to keep epinephrine auto-injectors on hand that their trained staff could use on any child experiencing anaphylaxis if needed. Many first time allergic reactions occur at school. Other initiatives resulting from the American with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008 have encouraged parents of children with severe food allergies, to develop 504 plans that provide them with the accommodations they need for their food allergies.

FAAN was founded in 1991 to serve as a key resource for food allergy information and in November of 2012, it announced its merger with the Food Allergy Initiative (FAI) and now the combined nonprofit organization is called Food Allergy Research Education (FARE). This organization works on behalf of of the 15 million Americans with food allergies.

There isn't a clear reason for the increase in allergies; however a 2008 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicated an 18 percent increase in food allergies between 1997 and 2007. Milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, soy, and wheat account for 90 percent of all food-allergic reactions. Some allergies such as cow's milk, egg and soy may be outgrown, but most peanut, tree nut, fish and shellfish allergies are lifelong. Any food could potentially cause an allergic reaction and unfortunately, the only "cure" for allergies is to totally avoid the food allergens.



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Food reactions can be as mild as an itchy mouth or can result in anaphylaxis, a severe and potentially deadly reaction that could also include a drop in blood pressure and loss of consciousness. This can also result from insect stings, latex and medications. Every 3 minutes, someone ends up in the emergency department for a food allergy reaction or 200,000 visits annually and there are over 150 deaths attributed to food allergy-induced reactions each year.

FAAN had numerous websites that are still accessible and contain valuable allergy-related information on research and legislative updates, educational information, recipes and free resources for patients, parents, teachers and the food service industry.

In Colorado Springs there is a local support group, MOSAIC, that meets monthly for parents of children with severe food allergies. If you are interested in learning more about this group you can visit their website at www.csmosaic.org.

If you have any questions or concerns about food allergies, please don't hesitate to schedule an appointment with the dietitian by calling 526-7920.