

Food Allergy Guidance

The following statement by the American Academy of Pediatrics emphasizes the need for a plan to prevent and manage food allergies:

Food allergies can cause a severe and life-threatening reaction. The only sure way to prevent a food allergy reaction is to avoid the problem food altogether, in any form, at all times.

If symptoms of a severe food allergy are present, administer emergency medicine immediately and notify health care provider/s as soon as possible. If unable to contact them, call 9-1-1 if available at your location or the local emergency number if 9-1-1 is not available.

Developing a plan at camp for those with food allergies takes planning long before the arrival date. It is important that the family and youth begin this process as soon as possible; it is also important to include necessary leaders and health care providers in preparing for camp.

This document provides a framework for anyone in Scouting to develop a plan for a participant with food allergies, sensitivities, or intolerances. With Scouting experiences in mind, the language is focused on camping. However, the information is valuable in any Scouting context and can be used by units, camps, and councils.

Scouting's Guiding Principles

- The safety of all participants is paramount.
- The responsibility for the management of a medical condition, such as a food allergy, lies with the individual or the individual's parents or guardians.
- Any plan should include a commitment to protecting the individual's right of privacy and confidentiality.

This information is not intended to be comprehensive. More information about managing food allergies can be found in the resources listed at the end of this document.

Understanding Food Allergies, Food Intolerances, and Food Sensitivities

It is important to know the difference between true food allergies and food intolerances and sensitivities. True food allergies may lead to life-threatening allergic reactions. Food intolerances or sensitivities do not.

Food Intolerances/Sensitivities	Food Allergies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gradual onset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immediate onset
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NOT life-threatening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potentially life-threatening
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very common	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less common
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Immune system reaction

Food Allergy Action Plans

A food allergy may lead to a **life-threatening allergic reaction** (anaphylaxis) and may occur even if previous reactions have been mild. A food allergy action plan is an individualized plan that includes prevention strategies, severe food allergy symptoms, and prescribed emergency treatment in the event a severe food allergy reaction occurs.

Family Responsibilities

Developing a food allergy action plan is the responsibility of the individual if an adult. If a youth, it is the responsibility of the youth's parents or guardians. Begin planning as soon as possible before the event. Choosing an appropriate camping experience is important, especially for those diagnosed with a severe food allergy.

Before Camp/Event

Meet with your child and their health care provider.

- Carefully read and complete the [Annual Health and Medical Record](#) (AHMR). Pay close attention to the supplemental risk advisories for high adventure. With your health care provider, develop a food allergy action plan for various settings (home, school, others) together.
- Discuss the type of camping experience with your health care provider. Is the camp appropriate for someone with a food allergy?
- Determine if the child is capable of self-administering medications needed in response to a food allergy reaction. Teach the child the proper method if necessary.

Meet with your child and unit adult leadership.

- Discuss the possibility of attending the camp/event. Include the health care provider, if necessary, in the discussion.
- Review the completed AHMR, being sure to include allergies.
- Develop a food allergy action plan specific for the camp/event, including travel. Provide to the unit adult leader(s) copies of the final food allergy action plan that was developed with your health care provider. Discuss the steps of this action plan with the unit leader(s).
- Determine if a parent or guardian must attend the camp/event with their child. This is strongly encouraged, especially for youth who cannot manage the action plan alone.

Meet with camp leadership. Arrange the meeting as soon as possible.

- Include unit leadership and your youth in the conversation.
- Determine if it is possible for the youth to attend the camp.
- Review the allergy action plan and revise if needed. Include all medications.
- Provide copies of the final food allergy action plan to the camp leadership.
- Review the menu. Discuss any potential allergens and develop a plan for alternatives.
- Include meal service (e.g., cafeteria style, family style, self-serve) in the plan and communicate the food allergy action plan to camp staff upon arrival.

Note: It may be necessary for the family to provide all food for the youth. Agree upon a plan with unit and camp leadership that includes food storage both at camp and during travel, food service methods, availability, etc.

Your Food Allergy Action Plan

Using as a model the food allergy action plan already in place from your child's health care provider for home and school, include specific camp/unit events. Consider all activities the youth will be involved in, such as merit badge courses, craft activities, cracker barrel, travel, etc.

It is recommended to share the plan, as well as any changes, with:

- Unit members: adult leaders, the youth's buddy, patrol or crew, unit youth leadership, and others, depending on the circumstances.
- Camp leadership: camp director, camp dining hall manager, and camp health officer. Others may be included as determined by the camp.

See resources below for [sample action plan](#) and more.

Medication

Provide adequate amounts of unexpired medication according to the camp's guidelines. Keep in mind that additional medication may be necessary based on the type of camp and activities.

Determine who will be responsible for carrying emergency medication. Youth who are capable should be encouraged to always carry it with themselves if permitted. It is important to note that state and local laws may vary and must be followed (e.g., if the camp is located in a different state). Contact the camp or the council health supervisor for specific information.

Arrival at Camp

The parent or guardian or the unit's adult leader, along with the youth, should:

- Notify camp personnel upon arrival of the youth's food allergy.
- Meet with camp leadership, which may include the camp director, camp health officer, food service director, and others as necessary.
- Review with all the final version of the food allergy action plan. Provide copies.
- Review medications, including the health care provider's written directions, proper use, reason for medication, storage requirements and location, and possible side effects.

Youth Responsibilities

It is the family's responsibility to review with the youth the information needed to manage their food allergy and to be prepared for unintentional exposure to the allergen(s).

Ideally, the youth should:

- Review and understand the food allergy action plan.
- Wear a medical alert bracelet.
- Never trade food with other campers.
- Never eat anything with unknown ingredients.
- Read every available label and check any questionable ingredients with their parent, guardian, or knowledgeable adult unit leader.

- Limit exposure to food allergens by eating in a separate area away from potential allergens.
- Consider bringing their own food.
- Tell an adult leader if a reaction seems to be starting, even if there are no visible symptoms of an allergic response.
- Seek adult help if symptoms are beginning. Do not isolate themselves.
- Carry (or have available) an epinephrine auto-injector device if prescribed by their health care provider. Parents or guardians and/or adult unit leaders should first check specific camp rules and state and local regulations. This medication may be carried by an adult unit leader or camp leader if the youth is unable or not permitted to do so.
- Let the unit's adult leaders know immediately if they self-administer an epinephrine auto injection.
- Be aware that potential food allergens may be anywhere such as trading posts, camp stores, camp activity areas, etc. Be sure to check for possible food allergens before consuming anything. **If a food product does not have a label, it should not be consumed.**

Adult Leaders' Responsibilities

Scouting America does not mandate and does not recommend that leaders take responsibility for managing a youth's food allergies. If an adult leader agrees to do so, then it is recommended that they:

- Assist in developing the food allergy action plan.
- Obtain a copy of the final version of the action plan.
- Be familiar with the specific food allergens and recognize symptoms of a food allergy.
- Understand the treatment plan and be prepared to act in the event of a severe reaction (anaphylaxis).

Certification in CPR and AED procedures and knowledge of how to properly use an epinephrine auto-injector device are highly recommended.

Resources

- FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education)—Common Food Allergens: www.foodallergy.org/living-food-allergies/food-allergy-essentials/common-allergens
- American College of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology—Food Allergy: acaai.org/allergies/allergic-conditions/food/
- American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology—Food Intolerance Versus Food Allergy: www.aaaai.org/tools-for-the-public/conditions-library/allergies/food-intolerance
- FARE Heading to Camp: www.foodallergy.org/resources/heading-camp
- American Camp Association—How to Prepare for Food Allergies at Camp: www.acacamps.org/blog/how-prepare-food-allergies-camp
- About Handwashing | Clean Hands | CDC: www.cdc.gov/clean-hands/about/

Gluten and Celiac Resources

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics—Celiac Disease: An Introduction:
www.eatright.org/health/diseases-and-conditions/celiac-disease/celiac-disease-an-introduction

Food Allergy Action Plan

- FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education)—Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan:
www.foodallergy.org/life-with-food-allergies/food-allergy-anaphylaxis-emergency-care-plan

Scouting Resources

- Annual Health and Medical Record:
www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/
- Medication Use in Scouting:
filestore.scouting.org/filestore/HealthSafety/pdf/SAFE_USE_OF_MEDICATION_IN_Scouting.pdf