

Let's Celebrate: A Guide to Special Occasions

From picnics and pool parties to annual traditions like trick-or-treating and holiday parties, special occasions can play host to a number of allergens that can cause life-threatening allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) in certain children. Avoidance of those allergic triggers is the critical first step in managing life-threatening allergies, but allergens are not always obvious, and accidental exposure may still happen.

Participating in special occasions can often be overwhelming and stressful for a child with potentially life-threatening allergies and for their parents or caregivers, friends and party chaperones. The good news is that, with a little planning ahead, parties and other special occasions don't have to be something to dread.

Get Informed!

Be well-versed on your child's potentially life-threatening allergy. Anaphylaxis is a life-threatening allergic reaction that happens when someone comes into contact with a food or other trigger that they are allergic to. Some of the most common items that can cause a reaction include foods like cow's milk, eggs and peanuts; insect stings; medications; and latex (like in balloons or gloves used for cleaning or serving food).

Below are some simple steps that you can take to help you to prepare for special occasions.

Plan Ahead!

- Alert the party host to a child's potentially life-threatening allergies ahead of time and offer to provide food that is safe for the child to eat
- Encourage children to speak up and inform friends and party chaperones about their potentially life-threatening allergies, triggers that they need to avoid, how to recognize the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and when they should get an adult in case of an emergency
- Make sure other adults are aware of your child's potentially life-threatening allergy (e.g., parents, party hosts, babysitters, etc.)
- Offer to chaperone at the event and keep a close eye on potential allergic triggers. Plus, the host will appreciate the extra adult help!
- Don't let children share food or drinks with friends
- Tell children to wash their hands well with soap and water, before and after eating and playing
- Try not to make the child feel different than the other children, but instead work with the party host to organize activities that allow them to join in
- Be on the look-out for insects and places where they gather (e.g., bee hives, ant farms) if an event takes place outside
- Remind a child not to wander off if they suspect symptoms are beginning
- Ensure that the child has an Anaphylaxis Action Plan that has been reviewed with the parents and a health care professional
- Make sure that parents or caregivers and/or the child with potentially life-threatening allergies have two epinephrine auto-injectors on hand for response to potential life-threatening allergic reactions

For more information about severe allergies, visit EpiPen.ca.



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