

## Nut Policy FAQ

Policy: Murch is a peanut and tree nut free school. Please check for nut products/by-products in foods sent to school. Products that list nuts in the ingredients are not permitted.

### **Why nut free?**

More schools across the country are becoming nut free because the incidence of these potentially lethal allergies is increasing rapidly. Food allergies affects 1 in every 13 children (under 18 years of age) in the U.S. Peanut / Tree Nut allergies are particular severe; ingestion of even tiny amounts can cause a life threatening reaction. Avoiding the allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction.

### **What does an allergic reaction look like?**

Allergic reactions can range from mild to severe to life-threatening (anaphylaxis). Reactions can include a skin reaction like hives or redness, vomiting, difficulty breathing, swelling of lips, face or throat, loss of consciousness and even death.

### **Why is Murch *now* a nut-free school?**

For the first time in living memory Murch has a cafeteria. Allergic reactions can occur by touching a nut (contact), inhalation and/or eating a food item that contains a nut, even trace amounts of the allergen. The shared space of a cafeteria increases the risk to all children with allergies that they could have an allergic reaction.

### **How can it affect another child if my child brings a peanut butter sandwich or almonds to school?**

A child who has eaten or handled foods containing nuts can transfer the allergen containing oils to shared tables, chairs, drinking fountains, playground equipment or even doorknobs. A public school is required to provide all children a safe learning environment and accommodate physical, social, emotional and cognitive needs as needed. A food allergy is considered by the Federal Government a medical disability.

### **I have food with a label that says “manufactured in a facility with nuts” or “processed on shared equipment with nuts.” Can I send that to school?**

Yes. These items can be sent to school for individual consumption. Allergic children *cannot* eat these items but these foods can be safely consumed by other children nearby.

### **What about a label that says “may contain” peanuts or tree nuts?**

These foods should be left at home.

### **Do you realize this is inconvenient for me?**

Yes. If this were not potentially life threatening we wouldn't ask you not to send nuts to school. Your efforts are truly appreciated by those affected. Parents who deal with this every time their child puts a bite in their mouth know it is challenging, but it does get easier as you get used to it.

### **How do I explain this to my child?**

Empathy and compassion are the important parts here, with a feeling of good fortune that your own child doesn't suffer from a life-threatening allergy. Explain to your child that by not

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bringing nut products to school, he/she is helping take care of, keep safe, and even protect these students with nut allergies. Ask them to imagine what it would be like to attend a birthday party and not be able to eat the cake or have ice cream on a hot day. Children will feel proud to be able to help out in this way.

### **My child only eats peanut butter sandwiches. Now what do I do to make sure he eats a nutritious lunch with enough protein?**

There are healthy alternatives out there to peanut and other nut butters as well as to products containing nuts. Some lunch ideas are:

Cold cuts, tuna, hot dogs, hamburger, chicken nuggets, cut up chicken, fish sticks, quesadillas, pizza, hummus, cheese, yogurt, chickpeas, beans, edamame, hard boiled eggs, tofu and cottage cheese.

There are also several brands of nut free butter substitutes on the market now that are readily available at Giant, Safeway, Whole Foods and Target. Those brands include Sunbutter, SoyNut Butter and Wow butter.

### **What about snacks?**

The important thing is to read the label as products may change manufacturing methods. There is an extensive list of nut free products that is frequently updated here:

<http://snacksafely.com/safe-snack-guide/>

### **What about birthdays?**

There are many ways to honor and celebrate a child's birthday that do not involve food. If you want to send cupcakes to the class there are brands available that are labeled "school safe." Please discuss these options with your child's teacher or check out the Murch website.

### **What will happen if an allergen is sent to school?**

The food containing the allergen will not be opened and will be put back into backpacks or lunch boxes. Your child will be provided a lunch from the cafeteria.

### **Is this driven by medical literature or data-driven policy guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics or other assessment of risk?**

Yes. As stated on the FARE website: "On October 30, 2013, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) published "Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs" - the first national comprehensive guidelines for school food allergy management. The guidelines are intended to support the implementation of school food allergy management policies in schools and early childhood programs, and guide improvements to existing practices.

The CDC guidelines seek to protect the physical and emotional health of students with food allergies by providing practical information and strategies for schools while reinforcing federal laws and regulations. The guidelines are intended to support the implementation of school food

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allergy management policies in schools and early childhood programs, and guide improvements to existing practices. Implementing these guidelines may help schools reduce allergic reactions, improve response to life-threatening reactions, and ensure current policies are in line with laws that protect children with serious health issues."

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