

BACK TO SCHOOL CHECKLIST



The new school year can be a challenging time for parents with children with food allergies. Here is a checklist and some suggestions to help you:

1. Is your child's Anaphylaxis (or Allergy) Action Plan up-to-date and signed by your doctor? Note that if your child has food allergy but not felt to be at risk of anaphylaxis, or does not have an auto-injector, they should have an Allergy Action Plan. Go [here](#) to find a range of information and resources to help you.
2. Is your child's medication up to date including anti-histamines and the auto-injector if prescribed? Have you arranged for a suitable container for these to be carried/stored at school, and a copy of the Action Plan stored with it?
3. Does your child also have asthma or eczema? If so, do they have a written plan for these?
 - For eczema, check our updated eczema page, [here](#), which includes a link to an Eczema Plan. ASCIA also has an Eczema Action Plan which you can view [here](#).
 - For asthma, Management Plans are available on:
<http://www.asthma-nz.org.nz/Downloads.html>
<http://asthmafoundation.org.nz/your-health/resources/>
4. Does the school have a plan for:
 - Emergency response in the case of a severe reaction – including any training school staff will need
 - Allergy/age and location-appropriate procedures to enable your child to avoid exposure to the foods concerned, while still being able to participate fully in all school activities?

If not, ask for a meeting with the school's principal, your child's teacher(s) and the school's public health nurse or school nurse.

PLANNING

5. Some of the details to consider in the plan, depending on the age of your child:
 - Every child is different so while school staff may know the basics, it is important to explain how **your** child experiences allergy symptoms
 - If your child also has asthma and/or eczema then a plan for managing these is important e.g. to be able to use the sick bay at lunch time to apply creams; get help from a teacher aid etc
 - How to ensure all school staff (locums, duty teachers, specialist teachers etc) can identify your child, recognise the signs of a severe reaction and know what to do
 - Where should the medication kit including the auto-injector be kept
 - Supervision through morning tea and lunch breaks; planning for school trips etc

- Allergy New Zealand's Guidelines are a useful guide – hard copies can be purchased online or downloaded for free from the website [here](#).

6. Note that some children may be eligible for High Health Needs Funding from the Ministry of Education. The school is responsible for applying. However the fund is quite limited and should not be relied upon for the school to be able to meet your child's needs. The Ministry also has a publication "Health conditions in an education setting" which can be downloaded from their website [here](#).

7. Risk minimisation: Strategies need to be both age-appropriate and focussed on the development of your child's ability to cope independently in the longer term. Some strategies should be implemented from the start as the basis of good habits for your child, including:

- Handwashing after eating (as well as before)
- Only eating food they have brought from home and/or a trusted source

Allergy New Zealand's "Letting Go" booklet is a guide for parents to teaching children how to live with food allergies – copies are free to members or can be purchased online [here](#).

8. School camps and other activities outside the school grounds: A useful guide for schools, parents and students is "Preparing for Camp and Overnight School Trips with Food Allergies" written by our colleagues at Anaphylaxis Australia. Copies available through our shop online [here](#).

9. Involve your child as much as possible in developing the plan and strategies for managing at school, and encourage them to speak up in situations where teachers or other adults may have forgotten or not be aware of their food allergies. Your child's friends can also be a great support network so look for opportunities to 'educate' them as well.

10. A co-operative approach works best so look for opportunities where you may be able to help the school or your child's class – as a volunteer on a school trip, reading a book to new entrants and so on. Allergy New Zealand's Guidelines booklet has more suggestions.

11. On the other hand, know your rights and also where you might be able to get support and advice if you feel the school is not providing your child with a safe environment. The public health nurse attached to your school may be able to help. There is also a useful fact sheet available from the Ministry of Education which can be downloaded [here](#).

