



The CEC restricts peanuts and peanut butter. This memo outlines the specific practice the CEC has implemented and explains the rationale behind it.

The CEC has implemented a practice that expressly prohibits peanuts and peanut butter from the CEC at all times. The CEC will not be purchasing or serving any food or snacks with peanuts or peanut butter. In order to facilitate this practice, we are requesting the cooperation of all parents whose children are enrolled at the CEC.

This particular practice was adopted to address the needs of several children in our program who have a life-threatening allergy to peanuts. Simple contact with peanuts or their oils could be potentially fatal to these children, and we have a responsibility to care for them and address their needs.

We understand that parents cannot control the trace oils in the products they send in their child's lunch. Lunch items containing peanuts and peanut butter will be restricted from the environment. We realize that this may have an impact on your family, but we hope that you will be able to work with us in this practice. At the bottom of this memo, we have provided a list of suggestions for non-peanut alternatives for lunches.

Thank you for participating in creating a safe environment for the individuals with life threatening allergies. Together, parents, children and program staff are unifying as a community to create an environment that can be inclusive to as many children as possible.

Alternatives to Peanuts and Peanut Butter –
Please note- some of these items below may need to be excluded if additional life threatening allergies emerge.

Almond or soy butter
Cream cheese
Tofu cream cheese

meat or soy meat
hard boiled eggs/egg salad
tuna or tuna salad

beans/rice/cheese
hummus & flatbread
avocado & cheese

Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Peanut Policy

Why isn't the CEC was going to be completely "nut-free"?

Over the past few months, we have been identifying several alternatives that would meet the needs of particular children, one of which was to become completely "nut-free".

Upon further evaluation of the medical needs of the children in our program, we have determined that eliminating peanuts and peanut butter from our program is sufficient to meet their needs.

What is a peanut allergy?

A peanut allergy occurs when an individual who comes into contact through touch, inhalation or ingestion, of peanuts or peanut oil, and experiences an adverse reaction. The reaction may begin within minutes or hours of exposure to the food and can range from mild rash to anaphylactic shock which may lead to death.

If you would like more information on peanut allergies, please visit the web sites listed below:

http://www.allergic-reactions.com/consumer/2_1.cfm?site=Google+placement=AD+cat=food+kw=peanut+allergies

<http://www.foodallergy.org/>

<http://www.oma.org/phealth/peanuts.htm>

<http://www.allerg.qc.ca/peanutallergy.htm#charact>

Is a peanut allergy common?

As you may be aware from reports in the media, individuals reporting allergic reactions to peanuts have increased in number in recent years, and organizations, such as airlines, are accommodating allergy sensitive customers by adopting a no-peanut policy due to the life-threatening nature of the allergic reaction for some individuals. Currently, it is estimated that approximately 1.5 million individuals in the U.S. are allergic to peanuts. This corresponds with the trend of a general increase in allergic sensitivities among children, although the cause is not yet understood by researchers.

Doesn't the American Academy of Pediatrics suggest not feeding children peanuts?

Due to the increasing prevalence of peanut allergies in our society and the life threatening consequences of the allergy, the AAP recommends that children not be offered peanuts and peanut products, such as peanut butter, before the age of three.

I've heard that mothers who are nursing should not eat peanut products. Is that true?

According to an article in the April 4, 2001 issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association, protein from peanuts ingested by lactating mothers is secreted into breast milk, and exposure to peanut protein during breastfeeding may sensitize babies at risk of peanut allergy.

How many children in our program have a peanut allergy? To what degree are they affected?

Several children in our program in different classrooms have been identified as having this life threatening peanut allergy. For some of the children the allergic reaction is so severe that these children only need to come in contact with peanuts or their oils to cause

a severe life threatening reaction. For others, it is only physical ingestion that will cause a life threatening reaction.

Who are these children? Shouldn't we all know their names to protect them?

Many children in our program have different types of allergies. To protect their privacy, we do not disclose particular children's names or their allergies to the program wide population. However, be assured that the directors of the program and their caregivers are intimately aware of each specific child's allergies, and are trained and equipped to recognize and address their particular needs if an allergy is triggered.

How have other programs addressed this peanut allergy?

Various early childhood programs have addressed this peanut allergy differently. Some, such as many Bright Horizon Centers and Cottage Co-op have become "peanut free" programs. Others limit peanut products that are brought to the program, or will impose a "peanut free" restriction in certain classrooms or age groups. Some elementary schools isolate individuals to a specific table for eating, or in some case, require children to eat isolated from their peers.

Why are we doing this program-wide? Can't we just limit this policy to the specific classrooms that have those children?

Given the fact that we have several children with this life threatening allergy, and the intimate contact that our children experience with each other, we have concluded that our ability to create a safe environment for a person with extreme peanut allergies is dependent on totally eliminating these specific foods from the program locations where these individuals are enrolled. We want to make sure that we adequately address the medical conditions that our children face in a preschool setting. Even the most diligent teacher supervision cannot guarantee that a child consuming foods with peanuts or peanut oils would not spread peanut residue on numerous surfaces which could be later touched by the children with the specific allergy.

Why do we have to have formal practice? Can't we just do this on our own?

A formal practice ensures that everyone in our program is aware of what we are trying to achieve. Our new awareness of the extent and dangers associated with food allergies has caused us to begin a more comprehensive review of the overall risks, and methods of dealing with these risks at the CEC. We will keep the CEC community informed as we assess our future response to what appears to be a growing concern within the health, child care and educational communities.

What happens if I forget? Or what happens if my CEC child takes my school age child's lunch which contains a peanut butter sandwich?

Staff members will be observing lunches for the foods that have been restricted as a part of our greater food policy, including peanuts and peanut butter. In case a parent does not realize that a food contains peanuts or peanut butter, the child will be fed an alternate protein lunch (e.g., almond butter sandwich) and the item will be returned home along with a note indicating that it is no longer appropriate to bring this item to the CEC.

Am I legally liable for anything that might happen?

The CEC is not in a position to advise individuals on their potential legal liability. . However, we are asking that you comply with this practice in order to help ensure the safety of all of our children. A blatant disregard for the practice is not acceptable.

Is this what my child has been talking about?

Most children in the Lower Yard and school-age groups which are affected are already aware of this matter, and some have made very philosophical comments, such as “We should stop eating peanut butter so no one has to worry about being safe...then everyone can play!” We will explain to children that refraining from having peanuts and peanut butter at the CEC is how we try to insure the safety of anyone who could get really, really sick from eating or touching something which has peanuts in it or peanut oils on it. We do not discuss the fatal nature of anaphylactic shock.

Is the CEC doing this strictly to comply with ADA?

The American Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that reasonable accommodation be made for a person with a disability, and severe or life threatening peanut allergies may fall under this Act. The CEC is committed to compliance with ADA, but more importantly this is a question of trying to ensuring that we are addressing the particular children’s specific medical needs.

Will this practice continue after the specific children with the allergy are no longer enrolled at the CEC?

At this time, we expect to continue with this practice. Due to the increasing nature of peanut allergies in our population and the fact that the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children not be given peanut products until after the age of three, we believe this approach will be most effective over the long run. As with all practices, it will be re-evaluated periodically.

My child also has an allergy to a specific food product. Can the CEC also prohibit that product from its program?

The CEC is specifically prohibiting peanut and peanut butter due to the potentially fatal consequences of the allergic reaction, and the fact that the allergy is a *contact* allergy. However, the staff is always willing to work with parents to address their children’s special needs. Please ensure that a lead teacher in your child’s room or a program director is aware of your child’s special needs.