

KCC Nut Free Campus Policy FAQ

August 2015

What is a nut allergy?

It is an allergy to tree nuts and peanuts (a legume). Tree nuts include, but are not limited to, walnut, almond, hazelnut, cashew, pistachio, and Brazil nuts. This is one of the most common food allergies in the United States. It is one of the food allergens most frequently linked to anaphylaxis, a life threatening allergic response to a toxin that results in an inability to breathe, which may result in death.

Why did you choose now to follow a nut free policy?

Administration believes this approach will provide the safest environment for the unique mix of our students and the multiple shared spaces in our K-12 building. KCC administration has explored other protocols over the past few school years. These included prescribing individual protocols for affected students, creating a nut free classroom, and having a special area in the lunchroom for students to sit. These various approaches did not prevent students from having allergic reactions and therefore, Administration decided to implement the nut free campus policy.

How does being a K-12 campus result in this policy?

Since anaphylaxis can be brought on by contact with nuts, nut oil or nut residue, shared surfaces present challenges. We recognize that high school students have developed coping strategies for dealing with their allergies, but we also recognize that elementary and middle school students are still learning basic life management skills. Navigating life threatening allergies is not something we can expect at their developmental levels. This challenge is exacerbated by shared classrooms, shared bathroom and door handles, shared gym equipment, shared computer keyboards and shared desks, etc. In a community that shares all of these things, it is all of our responsibility to share in promoting the safety of everyone.

How are other schools handling tree nut allergies?

There are several different protocols that public and private schools are following across our country. This includes prescribing individual protocols for affected students, creating a nut free classroom, having a special area in the lunchroom for students with nut allergies to sit, and creating a nut free campus. In developing this policy we considered the policies of local public schools, and schools outside of the metro area.

How are we defining nut free food items?

We are referring to food items with nuts reference in the ingredients. Food manufactured in a facility that may contain nuts is still acceptable on campus.

Do you have recommendations for other foods I can serve my child for lunch and snacks?

When you shop for items, you can select any food item that does not contain nuts or nut pieces. There are many good protein substitutes including Wowbutter, and sun nut butter. Other items to consider are yogurt, baked tortilla chips with salsa, fruit roll-ups, applesauce, fresh fruit, pretzels, graham or goldfish crackers, bagel w/ cream cheese, low/no fat cottage cheese, cheese or cheese sticks, spaghetti, vegetable sticks, and salad. This year, KCC is also offering a salad bar in our cafeteria as a choice for our meal plan.

Isn't this a drastic measure to take since only a few students are affected by nut allergies?

We have at least 17 known students who suffer from severe allergic reaction to tree nut allergy. These are students who have an anaphylactic reaction that would require an epi-pen to reverse. While this is not a majority of students, it does represent enough students whose safety will better served by this policy.

Are you trying to guarantee 100% nut free environment?

To promise a 100% nut free environment is beyond our control. The point of this policy is to reduce the risk rather than eliminate it. We cannot guarantee there will never be exposure, but we can work together to lower the risk.

How will you treat a student who reacts from being exposed to nuts?

Students who have a severe allergic reaction to nuts can be treated with epinephrine administered in a special device that injects the medicine into the affected student. When a parent provides this medicine to the school, it is kept with the appropriate school staff member. Since KCC does not employ a nurse, Faculty have been trained how to use an epi-pen when a student goes into anaphylactic shock. Additionally, parents will be notified and 911 will be called.

Why are you not dealing with other food allergies?

We recognize that it would be impossible to create a completely safe food environment for every student. Nuts are the most common food allergy and often carry the most severe allergic reactions. For students who experience other food allergies, we work to develop procedures in individual classrooms to minimize risk. However, we recognize the limits to global policies.

What will you do with students who bring foods to school containing nuts?

We recognize this is a new policy that will take some time for our students to adjust their habits. Our initial efforts will focus on helping to educate them. We will assume that student's intent is to comply and that only repeated non-compliance and/or willful intent to violate would result in consequences.

How will the lunch program be affected by the nut free policy?

The lunch program menu provided by our lunch provider has been adjusted to replace the PBJ offering with a ham and cheese sandwich. The lunch provider will also not be serving foods containing nuts and does not cook in peanut oil. We are also excited that we will have a parent group that will help us look at enhancing the quality of our lunch program.