

## PAC Recommendations on Food Allergies, Intolerances and Preferences

The PAC Health and Safety Committee has developed the guidelines below out of input received from Health and Safety Representatives throughout NSCC on how their individual co-op handles food concerns (what forms are filled out, how parents and teachers are notified of allergies, and how and who decides on what can and can't be served for snack).

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

1. Educate co-op members on the differences between food *allergies* (or *intolerances*) and food *preferences*
2. Ensure that all co-ops are aware of and following NSCC policies regarding food allergies
3. Assist co-ops in handling issues related to food allergies, intolerances and preferences by drawing upon the collective experience of NSCC co-ops

### **ALLERGIES vs. PREFERENCES**

**Food allergies or intolerances** present a health risk to the child and as such, *all adults* in the co-op are responsible for preventing children's exposure to foods that may cause an allergic reaction.

**Food preferences** are foods that parents prefer their child avoid (e.g. sugar, honey, processed foods) for health or other reasons, but do not necessarily pose an immediate health risk to the child. *Unlike food allergies, co-ops are not required to make special accommodation for food preferences*, though some co-ops do work to accommodate parents' special requests. If a food is offered that a parent prefers their child not eat, it is the *parent's responsibility* to make sure their child does not eat the food.

### **POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING FOOD ALLERGIES**

We recommend that all NSCC co-op facilities implement a nut free policy if none is yet in place. In addition, if parents know their child to be allergic to nuts or any other foods, the following steps should be taken:

1. Per NSCC Risk Management policy, *Parents are required* to fill out the Medical Emergency Response Plan in the Risk Management Manual, **have it signed by their doctor**, and return it to the classroom Health and Safety Representative. Please ensure that your co-op is using the most recent version of this form, located in Appendix C3 of the Risk Management Manual for Parent Education Cooperative Preschools, available online at [www.northseattlecoops.org](http://www.northseattlecoops.org) at the Forms and References tab.
2. *Health and Safety Reps* post a copy of the Medical Emergency Response Forms in an agreed upon location onsite in the classroom and notify (at parent meeting, via email, or both) parents, the classroom teacher and parent education instructor of allergies in the group.
3. Medications such as epi-pens, asthma inhalers, etc. needed to treat severe allergic reactions should be provided by parents and kept on-site in a secure location that is known to all adults in the co-op.
4. When new children join the group, repeat steps 1 through 3.

**Note** that allergy concerns are not limited to snack. Classroom activities (sensory table, play-doh, etc.) may also present risks to children with allergies.

### **WHAT TO SERVE AT SNACK TIME**

Most snacks consist of a dry food such as cereal that is purchased in large quantities by the co-op and a fresh fruit or vegetable brought by a parent. Determining what is appropriate to serve for snack is often a challenge for co-ops. Not only do food allergies and intolerances need to be accommodated, parents' *preferences* for what their child eats are often different. Below is a list of different ways NSCC co-ops have worked through these issues.

- *Health and Safety Rep* works with parents of children with allergies and intolerances to put together a short list of snacks that all parents can bring. This list is then presented and reviewed/revised/approved by all parents at the parent meeting.
- *Create a snack sheet* (see attached sample) with 1) the list of approved snack foods (or list of foods to be avoided), and 2) instructions on snack preparation (how to cut fruits/veggies so they're not a choking hazard), clean-up, and hygiene. Post the snack sheet in the snack room and/or distribute to parents.
- If allergies and intolerances are related to dry food snacks, *Parents* of children with allergies/intolerances can purchase dry food snacks for the entire quarter/year and receive reimbursement from the co-op.
- *Sugar* is a common concern among parents, and many co-ops agree to keep sugar snacks to a minimum.

(SAMPLE SNACK SHEET)

## **SNACKS at XXXX Cooperative Preschool\***

### **FOODS TO AVOID**

*Note: there are no peanuts, fish or meat products allowed at preschool.* Please make sure to also avoid the following foods when purchasing or preparing snack as some children in the co-op are allergic to these foods:

Wheat  
Eggs

Dairy  
Strawberries

### **SNACK DUTIES**

1. Begin preparing Snack the last 30 minutes of Free Play.
  2. Wash hands.
  3. Put away any dishes left in the draining rack from previous classes.
  4. Prepare appropriate number of trays\* to include:
    - a. small drinking cups
    - b. small measuring pitcher
    - c. napkins
    - d. food selections in their own bowls + tongs
    - e. large pitcher filled with water
    - f. small garbage bucket with damp sponge
- \*determined by number of small groups
5. Wipe all small group tables with prepared bleach solution and paper towels just after Clean-Up time begins.

### *After Snack:*

1. Collect any trays and garbage buckets.
2. Spray table tops with bleach solution and wipe clean; sweep under tables.
3. Wash the dishes first with soap then rinse clear water. Next, use bleach solution (ratio listed above sink in kitchen). Let air dry in rack.
4. Empty and bag-up all waste bins (3 in classroom, one in each bathroom and one in kitchen). New liners are stored in cupboard under the kitchen pass-through window.
5. Take trash to cans located just outside the downstairs playground exit – just past the playground “moon.”
6. After outdoor play, close the back door, re-latch the hallway wooden gate and close the door to the classroom.

*Some Ideas for Snacks at Preschool:*

Food to nourish the body can also be food for the intellect. To check this hypothesis, try this simple formula: One small group of children + an interesting snack + an adult to guide conversation = unlimited opportunity for children to express themselves, ask questions, learn new words and clarify concepts. Simple, everyday snacks can be “conversation starters” that help both children and adults explore many ideas about themselves, other people, other cultures, nature and animal life.

The list below enumerates a few snack ideas to intersperse with your “regulars.” They are simply ideas to add variety. Although children can be encouraged to try new and different foods, they should not be pressured to taste a food against their wishes. Simply handling and observing a strange food is an important experience and may be a first step to tasting. A good guide is to serve an unfamiliar food along with old favorites.

<b><u>Fruits</u></b>	<b><u>Vegetables</u></b>	<b><u>Other Ideas</u></b>
Cranberries Oranges (whole, in sections or to squeeze for juice) Tangerines, lemons, limes or grapefruit Grapes (cut lengthwise) and/or raisins Pears, fresh and canned Bananas Apricots, fresh or dried Pineapple, fresh and canned Plums Prunes or dates Cherries Strawberries, raspberries & blackberries Rhubarb	Celery and Carrot sticks Cucumbers, pickles Tomatoes Peas in the shell Raw beans Turnips Raw Potato Cauliflower Radishes Avocado Artichokes Corn on the cob (to cook at school – let kids remove the husks) Olives (with pits, without pits and stuffed)	Cheese, Tortillas, Bread Sticks, Crackers, Hard boiled eggs, Instant Puddings, Bread or cracker with butter or jam for the kids to spread themselves Different kinds of bread

**Try This:**

Foods are an excellent source for leaning about variety, color and texture.

- a. Compare different tastes with shades of color. (sweet oranges, sour lemons and salty crackers.)
- b. Serve different forms of the same food together such as canned and fresh pears, grated and cubed cheese, etc.
- c. Compare the texture of foods by talking about the slippery soft avocado, the hard, crunchy carrots and talk about how food feels to touch, break with hands or chew.
- d. Serve foods that are warm, cold, wet, dry, hard and sticky together.

*\*Many thanks to the Wallingford 3-5 AM Co-op for Snack Sheet information*

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