



ALLERGY GUIDE

MRM is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for all of its students. Studies show that one in 25 people, or one in 17 under the age of 3, has life-threatening food allergies. Because MRM students are served snack and consume lunch at school, MRM has a robust food allergy policy designed to help keep students safe from the risk of life-threatening reactions (anaphylaxis) at school. As **care for others** is a central tenet of the Montessori philosophy, MRM also aims to educate all children on the importance of caring for their food-allergic peers.

For All Many Rivers Families:

This is a **summary** of our Allergy Policy and how it will affect your child and his/her classroom:

- MRM aims to maintain a school **free of peanuts and tree nuts**. This means **no foods containing peanuts or tree nuts may be brought to school**. Foods found to contain nuts will be collected by a staff member and returned at the end of the day with a note of explanation. The student's nut-bearing item will be replaced with an item from the school's snack supplies.
- Before the beginning of the school year, MRM will send out an email detailing the list of life-threatening allergens, in addition to nuts, in your child's classroom.
- MRM strives to purchase allergen-free foods for classroom consumption. A snack menu is available on the MRM Family Site (family.manyriversmontessori.org)
- When packing your child's nut-free lunch and/or afternoon snack, we ask that you also consider sending meals that are also free of the classroom's other known allergens. **If a meal includes a known allergen (e.g., soy or egg) in your classroom, please include a note for the teacher** in your child's lunch box. Particularly with the toddler, primary and lower elementary students, the teacher may choose to separate your child from his/her food-allergic friend at lunchtime and afternoon snack time.
- We also ask that you consider the allergy limitations of the wider student body if you provide food for a **larger school gathering** (e.g. a school potluck). These dishes must be nut free, but MRM also provides allergen labels on which you can check off what other known allergens are present in each dish.
- In the case of **food intolerances** (instead of food allergies), MRM keeps a list of food intolerances for each classroom, but will serve these foods to the larger student body at snacktime. Parents are welcome at any time to send a substitute food with their child for snack.
- MRM staff maintain current training on the use of an EpiPen and will administer epinephrine in the event of a reaction.

- MRM carries an extra set each of EpiPen Jr and EpiPen. The epinephrine will be used in emergencies for those with unknown allergies who develop an anaphylactic response, and for those with known allergies when, on rare occasions, their personal emergency medication is found to be flawed. **Food-allergic students with an epinephrine prescription are expected to have their own epinephrine injector at school at all times.**
- **A useful handout about food allergies for kids titled “Be a PAL” has been appended to the back of this Guide.** We encourage you to print it out and talk with your kids about why we need to take measures to take care of our food-allergic friends, and why it is very much in line with the Montessori value of caring for others. Our staff will also use this handout as a starting point for conversations that come up at school. Further information for children can be found here: <http://www.foodallergy.org/be-a-pal>
- **We welcome feedback!** If you have any suggestions for improving MRM’s allergy policy, or this Guide, please contact Head of School Mark Niedermier at mark.niedermier@manyrivermontessori.org.
- Thank you for your willingness to keep our larger school community safe and healthy!

2. For Many Rivers Families with Food-Allergic Children:

- **If your child has a diagnosed food allergy**, please fill out and return a **Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan form with your doctor’s signature, before the second Friday of August each year.** The timing allows MRM families to be notified of food allergies at the school before the start of the school year. **A new form is required at the beginning of every school year.** This form is available on the online Student Registration form, as well as at the bottom of this Allergy Guide. This is important to help keep your child safe at school. **Note: MRM requires your doctor’s signature on this document.**
- Please also answer the questions on the online **Student Registration Form** in detail in order to help MRM make the best accommodations for your child and the classroom.
- If your child has an epinephrine prescription as noted on his/her Emergency Care Plan, **you must ensure that he or she has an auto-injector set (EpiPen or Auvi-Q) at school at all times.** You are highly encouraged to leave a set to be kept at school.
- If you require special accommodations for your child’s allergy, please indicate this on your child’s Student Registration Form, and inform the Head of School. We will contact you for a conference to discuss accommodations for your child.
- Please make sure that you update your Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan, with your doctor’s signature, and inform the Head of School and teachers if there are any significant changes to your child’s food allergy status.
- For classroom snacks, MRM will strive to purchase foods free of cross-contamination with known allergens in each classroom. A snack menu is available for perusal on the MRM Family Site. If you have a question about a brand of food on the school menu, please contact your child’s teacher. MRM teachers use the SnackSafely list (www.snacksafely.com), the Allergence online service (allergence.snacksafely.com), other online resources, and parental input to ascertain what brands of snack foods to serve to students. You are always welcome to send a substitute safe food with your child for snack.

- In the rare instance of a classroom party or special event involving food, MRM will give advance notice to parents with details of the food to be served. Any other food elements typical of a party/event (e.g. prizes) will not involve food.

Eleven Things You Might Not Know About Food Allergies

1. **There are different types of food allergies/sensitivities. Here is a very generalized listing of categories for the layperson:**
 - a. **igE-mediated Allergies:** This type of allergy involves the immune system, shows up on a blood test or skin test, and has the potential to cause anaphylaxis. In this kind of allergy, the immune system misinterprets a food as a harmful invader and releases histamine and other chemicals to protect the body from harm. Symptoms can include hives, vomiting, diarrhea, and respiratory distress. **Students with this type of allergy are usually prescribed an EpiPen and are required to have an Emergency Care Plan on file signed by your doctor. MRM does not allow these foods to be served as snack in the classrooms of affected children, and may ban these foods from school entirely** (currently, peanuts and tree nuts).
 - b. **Oral Allergy Syndrome:** Triggered by some fruits and vegetables, symptoms generally include itching around the mouth, throat, or swelling of the lips, mouth, tongue, and throat. These symptoms are usually confined to one area and do not normally progress beyond the mouth. The symptoms are usually confined to one area and do not normally progress beyond the mouth. Because the symptoms usually subside quickly once the fresh fruit or raw vegetable is swallowed or removed from the mouth, treatment is not usually necessary. This kind of allergy does not usually cause anaphylaxis. **Unless you have a Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan on file signed by your doctor, MRM will continue to serve these foods, but you are welcome to send an alternative for your child.**
 - c. **Intolerances/Sensitivities:** These are not allergies and do not show up on common blood and skin tests. These foods can cause real discomfort for affected patients, but do not lead to anaphylaxis. **MRM will continue to serve these foods in classrooms, but you are welcome to send an alternative for your child.**
2. **Myth: Food allergies are not life-threatening.**
Fact: It is estimated that between 150-200 people die each year due to allergic reactions to food.
3. **Myth: Food allergies can be mild.**
Fact: Yes, reactions can be mild, but even if someone has experienced mild reactions (such as a rash) in the past, they can still have an anaphylactic response to the next exposure. Allergies are unpredictable.
4. **Myth: Reactions get worse each time you have one.**
Fact: Allergic reactions are unpredictable. When they occur, they can be the same, less severe or more severe than previous reactions. Additionally, a person with food allergies

might not always experience the same symptoms of an allergic reaction (for example, an individual may have hives with one reaction, and vomiting with a subsequent reaction).

5. Myth: “How severe is his allergy?” Blood test or skin test results can reliably predict the severity of a reaction.

Fact: Today’s test does not predict tomorrow’s reaction. Low test numbers don’t mean you will only have “mild” reactions; the next reaction can be a severe one. Therefore, if your child has a true IgE-mediated allergy, it is considered “severe” for the purposes of allergy management at school.

6. Myth: When you see a reaction, give Benadryl first. If it gets worse, give Epinephrine.

Fact: No. New guidelines from the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) state that epinephrine should be the first line of treatment for a suspected reaction, followed by Benedryl to help with any skin symptoms.

7. Myth: Peanuts and tree nuts are the worst allergens.

Fact: While they are the most common triggers of allergic deaths, other top allergens can also cause dangerous reactions and death. The top 8 allergens are: milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, soy, wheat, peanuts, and tree nuts. In the preschool setting, milk and egg typically are the more common life-threatening allergens.

8. Myth: One little bite is OK.

Fact: It is not. There have been deaths from the ingestion of trace amounts of an allergen. Some patients also react from touching or inhaling trace amounts of an allergen (eg. dust from chopping and roasting nuts in a kitchen).

9. Myth: A food is safe if it doesn’t contain the allergen.

Fact: Awareness of food manufacturing practices is important to avoid foods cross-contaminated with an allergen. For example, if a line in a factory makes a peanut-containing food on it and then produces a non-peanut food on the same line, that can cause the non-peanut-containing food to have trace particles inside it.

10. Myth: Food allergies and food intolerance are the same.

Fact: Food intolerance is due to a lack of a digestive enzyme. Food allergy is a reaction from the immune system and is much more dangerous and life-threatening. With the exception of celiac disease, food intolerances do not involve the immune system. Although food intolerances may cause some of the same symptoms as a true food allergy, they cannot trigger anaphylaxis, a potentially life-threatening reaction.

11. Myth: It’s OK to have the food around as long as there is an EpiPen or Auvi-Q nearby.

Truth: The purpose of an epinephrine injector is to buy time until the ambulance comes and takes the patient to the hospital for further treatment. One injection may not be enough to save a person’s life, hence the need for strict avoidance.



Allergy Fact Sheet (Sample)

(please print and use this as a quick reference)

In addition to PEANUTS and TREE NUTS, MRM has the following life-threatening food allergies in its classrooms (Fall 2015):

Toddler: ___

Chester Primary: ___

Tischer Primary: ___

Primary 3: ___

Elementary: ___

Things to Note:

- **No foods with PEANUT or TREE NUT ingredients** are permitted on campus at any time.
- **When packing nut-free lunches and afternoon snacks:**
 - please try to avoid your classroom's allergens.
 - If a meal contains an allergen, please send a note in the lunch box so your child may be seated separately from an allergic friend.
 - **NOTE: Peanuts and Tree Nuts are never allowed in any foods brought to school.** If such foods are brought to school, the food will be collected by a staff member.
- **When making a potluck treat for a school event:**
 - please try to avoid known allergens.
 - If a dish contains an allergen, please check it off on the display cards provided by the Parent Association.
 - **NOTE: Peanuts and Tree Nuts are never allowed in any foods brought to school or school events.** If such foods are brought, they will not be served.
- **Tree Nuts include:** Tree nuts include, but are not limited to, walnut, almond, chestnut, hazelnut, cashew, pistachio, pine nuts, and Brazil nuts. These are not to be confused or grouped together with peanut, which is a legume, or seeds, such as sunflower or sesame. Coconut is botanically a fruit and is not considered a tree nut for MRM's allergy management purposes.

**THANK YOU FOR DOING YOUR PART TO HELP KEEP ALL MRM
STUDENTS SAFE!**