

Going to school with food allergies

- Waving good-bye to your 5 year old as they start school is stressful. A food allergy may make this even harder. There is lots of advice for schools about managing children with food allergy, and understanding your school's policies is important. Your school needs your child's action plan, and all staff need to know how to recognize and manage a food allergy reaction.
- Guidelines for helping schools to manage children at risk of food allergic reactions are available at www.allergy.org.au . Allergy New Zealand also have some great resources www.allergy.org.nz
- We can also think about how children can learn to keep themselves safe. In the long run your food allergic child will know what they are allergic to, how to avoid the allergens, and what to do if they have a reaction.
- At 5 they will need help, but we need to help them become confident and competent about managing their allergies. The skills they need will change as they grow up, but here are 5 skills to think about for your 5 year old.

5 skills for your child when starting school

<p>1</p>	<p>Know your allergens.</p> <p>Your child needs to know what they are allergic to, and know the forms that food may come in. There's no point in knowing you're peanut allergic if you don't know what a peanut looks like, or that it might hide in chocolate!</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>Stick to your own food and drink.</p> <p>Your child needs to know that they can eat only what is in their lunchbox. For young children having a simple rule of "no swapping or sharing of food" is easiest.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Keep your hands out of your mouth.</p> <p>Will your child know what to do if they get another child's food on them? If your milk allergic child gets someone's yoghurt on their hands, they need to know to wash their hands carefully with soap and water, and not to put their hands in their mouth.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Get help if you have a reaction.</p> <p>Could your child tell if they were having an allergic reaction? Talk about what they might notice with an allergic reaction and how to get the right help.</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Practise what to do and how to do it.</p> <p>If your child knows and follows the rules about their food allergies, starting school should be easier, both for them and for you. Practise with your child what to do if they are offered food, get food on their hands, and how to ask for help.</p>