



WEST MILFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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March 20, 2013

Dear Parents:

You've all read the headlines and seen the news stories: food allergies are a growing concern in schools across America. Millions of children - children who are perfectly healthy in every other way - must watch every single bite they eat, or risk suffering a severe or even life threatening anaphylactic reaction. In fact, food allergies claim an estimated 150 lives and are responsible for more than 125,000 emergency room visits each year. A major health issue such as this must be taken very seriously, and it has always been the policy of the West Milford Township Public Schools to make the safety and well-being of our students our top priority.

The district has established a Food Allergen and Cafeteria Protocol Committee to review our policy and current practices. A child with a serious food allergy can suffer a reaction merely by touching an allergen-containing food or through cross contamination. The district is committed to raising awareness regarding food allergies. Therefore, the following safety guidelines will be effective immediately:

- Food services have removed pre packaged nut products from all school cafeteria kitchens.
- All peanut butter products have been removed from all cafeteria kitchens and will no longer be offered through the food services department.
- The company responsible for the vending machines at Macopin Middle School and West Milford High School have been contacted and directed to remove all nut products.
- A picture of all elementary students with food allergies will be provided to the cafeteria staff (in the kitchen and at the register) so they will be able to visually identify students as they serve them food. The Point of Service System at Macopin and the High School provides this information to the cashiers.
- A yellow warning sign (see attached) will be posted within close proximity of the prepackaged snacks and the cash register to encourage food allergic students to read labels and be aware of possible food allergens in the product.
- All kitchen staff and cafeteria aides received allergen sensitivity and cafeteria protocol training on Tuesday, February 25th. These safety guidelines were reviewed.
- A brochure outlining allergen sensitivity was distributed to all kitchen staff and cafeteria aides and will be given to substitutes.

We encourage you to contact the district Supervisor of Food Services, Mrs. Sharon Sieber (973 697-1701) regarding any questions on food products. Please note that the pizza at the elementary schools that is served on Friday comes from local pizzerias throughout West Milford. The name of the establishment used for each school will be listed at the bottom of the elementary school menu. Please contact the provider directly with specific questions you may have regarding their food allergy protocols.

This is a learning process for all of us, but we trust that you understand how deeply important it is to keep our students safe. Please review the attached picture with your child(ren) so they are reminded to read labels of prepackaged foods purchased in the cafeteria prior to consuming. If throughout the course of the year you have any questions or concerns about food-allergy-related issues, please do not hesitate to contact your school nurse, building administrator or me.

Wishing you and your family a safe and healthy school year.

Sincerely,

Alice Steinheimer
Director of Special Services