

Understanding Food Allergen Cross-Contact May Help Save a Life

What is Cross-Contact?

Cross-Contact is the presence of unintended allergens. Contact with tiny amounts of allergens is enough to cause a serious allergic reaction.

How Does Cross-Contact Happen?

- ★ **Food to Food.** For example, nuts on top of a salad will lead to cross-contact of foods in the salad, even if the nuts are later removed.
- ★ **Food to Object.** Cookware, dishes, utensils or cooking surfaces that are not properly cleaned before preparing food for someone with a food allergy could lead to cross-contact.
- ★ **Food to Saliva.** Food allergens can be passed through saliva from people and pets.
- ★ **Hand to Hand, then to Mouth/Eyes/Nose.** This can occur when someone touches a product containing an allergen and then touches an object or hand of a child with food allergies, and then that child touches her mouth, eyes or nose in any way.

Common Sources of Exposure:

Hands, splatter from food, utensils, dishware, cups, water bottles, pots & pans, table tops, counter surfaces, cooking boards, cooking oils, sponges, dishrags, kitchen slicers, deep fryers, buffets, garnishing, high chairs, sanitizing buckets, sink handles, fridge doors & aprons.

[CLICK HERE for Kitchen "Do's & Don'ts" to Avoid Cross-Contact!](#)

How to Prevent Cross-Contact:

Do not share utensils, dishware, cups, water bottles, or food. Wash dishes, utensils, cups etc. thoroughly with soap and water.

Wash hands well with soap and water or hand wipes before eating or touching the face. Hand sanitizers don't work.

Clean tables and eating surfaces thoroughly with soap and water, commercial cleaners or commercial wipes. Allergens withstand heating and drying.



Take into Consideration the Child's Abilities:

Each child has different developmental capabilities. There are different issues of cross-contact with various age groups.

Younger age groups explore with their hands and their mouths. They are also less capable of self-managing and not as good at cleaning hands or surfaces.

Older children can effectively wash their hands before they eat, read labels and should know not to share. However, not wanting to seem different from friends can lead to risk-taking behaviors in pre-teens and teens.

**Keep in mind that children with developmental delays may not have the same management skills as their peers.*

If you have questions or would like more information about food allergies, please feel free to contact **Nashoba Food Allergy Education & Awareness (NFAEA)** at nashobafoodallergy@gmail.com.



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