

BE AWARE. BE SAFE.

CREATING SAFER ENVIRONMENTS FOR KIDS WITH FOOD ALLERGIES

Fall 2006

Holidays Bring Food for Thought in Food-allergic Families

HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY TIPS

- Place treats out of reach of young children
- Ask teachers before bringing in special holiday goodies to classrooms and bring only pre-packaged items that are clearly labeled with ingredients
- If you are hosting a party, ask if there are food allergy concerns on your invitation
- Be aware—ask a parent or caregiver before offering food to any child
- If you see a Check My Tag shirt or any other alert device on a child, be extra vigilant

As most American families kick off the holiday season, those with food allergic children are bracing themselves. The season of giving is frightening for these parents, who have to guard against the seasonal edibles that begin to deck the hall tables of every home. Most children have hardly had a chance to polish off their Halloween treats when candy canes, gingerbread houses and chocolate-filled stocking stuffers begin to tempt youngsters from end-aisle displays! What are delicious treats for most children, are loaded weapons for the 5 million American children who are in danger of anaphylaxis.

Anaphylaxis is a sudden, severe, systemic allergic reaction that can involve various areas of the body (such as the skin, respiratory tract, gastrointestinal tract, and cardiovascular system). Symptoms can include hives, vomiting, diarrhea, shortness of breath, wheezing, swelling of the lips, tongue and throat, a drop in blood pressure and loss of consciousness. Symptoms can occur within minutes or hours after contact with the allergy-causing substance. In 150-200 incidents a year, anaphylaxis is fatal. It can be caused by a trace amount of an allergen, the eight most common culprits being peanuts, tree nuts, dairy, milk, eggs, shellfish, fish and soy. Unfortunately, five of the top eight allergens are common ingredients in the chocolates and baked goods that are exchanged and consumed in abundance during the holidays.

“We’ve entered the ‘candy-on-the-coffee table’ season,” says Tom, whose son has a severe peanut allergy. “Beginning now and through the new year, my wife and I are forced to make a clean sweep of every home we visit to clear away the candies, chocolates

and nuts that could land Brad in the hospital.” The abundance of accessible food during the holidays creates added danger for a child with food allergies. It is especially risky for children who are too young to comprehend their medical condition or too young to tell people around them that they have to avoid certain foods. The challenge of readily identifying food-allergic children and raising awareness about food allergies is what inspired Ria Sharon, a mom of a toddler with food allergies to create a line of clothing specifically for children at risk.

Sharon started a company called Check My Tag, which makes shirts and dresses that are alert devices for food-allergic kids. “I wanted something that would give me back my confidence in being able to keep him safe. To my surprise, everything that was currently available in terms of alert products were not practical solutions for us.” Sharon applied her creative skills to develop a solution that eased her own anxiety and empowered her son’s teachers and baby sitters to care for him safely. The patent-pending design is specifically for children under five, whose parents may hesitate to put an alert bracelet or necklace on their young child but still want to keep their toddler safe in situations when they have to leave them with a caregiver.

The number of diagnosed cases of food allergies has doubled in the last five years. It is a life-threatening condition that affects one out of every fifteen children under the age of five. Yet, public awareness of food allergies still has a long way to go. Until there is a cure for food allergies, only a conscious and concerted effort to help children avoid their trigger foods will save lives.

This public safety information provided by



To receive this quarterly bulletin, send a request to info@checkmytag.com or call (888) 636-6405.

Check My Tag apparel and accessories available online at www.checkmytag.com

(888) 636-6405
info@checkmytag.com

© 2006 Check My Tag
This article may be freely distributed, as long as the source credit and web site are included.