

1. Which nuts cannot be brought to school?

Peanuts and tree nuts should not be brought to school. The following nuts are tree nuts and should not be brought to school: walnuts, almonds, pecans, hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios, Brazil nuts, pine nuts, macadamia nuts.

2. Can seeds (like sunflower seeds) be brought to school?

Yes. All seeds such as sunflower seeds, sesame seeds or pepitos can be brought to school. The only items that cannot be brought to school are peanuts and tree nuts (walnuts, almonds, pecans, hazelnuts, cashews, pistachios, Brazil nuts, pine nuts, and macadamia nuts).

3. I did some internet research and found coconut on a list of tree nuts. Can items with coconut be brought to school?

Yes. Coconut is actually the seed of a drupaceous fruit and does not trigger a reaction in a person with a tree-nut allergy. Patients diagnosed with tree-nut allergy are not advised to avoid coconut. However, in October of 2006, the FDA began technically identifying coconut as a tree nut, landing it on a few tree-nut lists and causing confusion.

4. My child usually eats a peanut butter sandwich for lunch. I'm looking for a good peanut butter substitute to use instead. Which ones can I bring to school and which should stay at home?

Peanut butter substitutes not made of nuts including Biscoff spread (made of biscoff cookies), I.M. Healthy SoyNut Butter (made of soybeans), and Sunbutter (made of sunflower seeds) can safely be brought to school. They can be found in the peanut butter section of virtually any grocery store including Albertsons, Kroger, Tom Thumb, Target, Central Market, HEB, Newflower and Whole Foods. When combined with jelly, most kids can't tell it's not peanut butter. All tree-nut-butter spreads are made of nuts and should stay at home. These include cashew butter, almond butter and Nutella.

5. I have a food with a label that says, "manufactured in a facility" with nuts or "processed on shared equipment" with nuts. Can I bring that to school?

Yes. Only items that actually contain nuts or nut products in the list of ingredients should be left at home. To be clear, allergic children cannot actually eat items with the "manufactured in a facility" with nuts or "processed on shared equipment" with nuts labels, but these foods can safely be consumed by other children nearby.

6. I will try my best to comply with the nut-sensitive policy, but I'm worried I might accidentally send something containing nuts. What are some food items that might contain hidden nuts I should be aware of?

Snack and lunch foods that typically contain peanuts or tree nuts are protein or energy bars, granola bars, chocolate candy, some cookies, a few breads (like Orrowheat Health Nut Bread), and, of course, nut-butter sandwiches (like peanut butter sandwiches).

7. My child usually brings a protein or granola bar to school for a snack. Are there nut-free protein and granola bars that are safe to send instead?

Yes. Most granola and protein bars do contain or “may contain” nuts and those should be left at home. However, two companies, Enjoy Life Foods (enjoylifefoods.com) and Vermont Nut Free Chocolates (Vermontnutfree.com) make nut-free granola and protein bars. Enjoy Life bars can be purchased at area grocery stores such as Kroger, Whole Foods, and Target. Vermont Nut Free protein and granola bars can be ordered online at vermontnutfree.com.

8. What are some snack foods that don't contain peanuts and tree nuts?

There are many snack foods that do not contain peanuts or tree nuts. Some examples are pretzels, Nutri-Grain cereal bars, yogurt, graham crackers, fruit, cheese, carrot or celery sticks and ranch dressing, Goldfish, Teddy Grahams, Pirates Booty, Popcorn, bagels, Nilla Wafers, animal crackers, tortilla chips, potato chips, Fritos, Sun Chips, Cheetos, plain Ritz crackers, Cheese Its, hummus, Carr's Water Crackers, Wheat Thins, Triscuits, Oreo cookies, and Chips Ahoy.

9. What are some kid lunch foods that don't contain peanuts or tree nuts?

Cold cuts, tuna, hot dog, hamburger, chicken nuggets, quesadilla, soup, pizza, hummus, pimento cheese, yogurt, cheese, fruit, pasta, tortilla wraps are all examples of kid lunch foods that don't contain peanuts or tree nuts. In addition, sunflower seed butter, Soy Nut butter and most Lunchables also provide easy lunch options.

10. One reason I like to send peanut butter to school is that it contains protein. I'm concerned that without the peanut butter my child won't get enough protein. What are some alternative protein sources I can send instead?

It's quite easy for children to get protein daily, especially if they eat animal foods. Meat and meat-products have all nine essential amino acids, which makes them complete proteins. Fish, lean meat, skinless poultry and low-fat dairy are excellent sources for your child. Plant-based foods such as whole grains and vegetables also contain protein, but the only complete plant protein is soy.

According to the CDC, children ages 4-8 need only 19 grams of protein daily, while children ages 9-13 need 34 grams of protein daily. These requirements can easily be met. For example, one 3oz piece of meat (about half a serving) contains 21 grams of protein. One cup of milk has 8 grams of protein, one cup of dried beans has about 16 grams of protein, and an 8oz container of yogurt contains about 11 grams of protein.

If you are concerned that your child is not eating enough protein, nut-free peanut butter substitutes such as I.M. Healthy SoyNut Butter and Sunbutter (made of sunflower seeds) both provide protein. Additional protein sources you can send to school are milk, cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, hard-boiled eggs, chicken, turkey, ham, hot dogs, turkey or chicken hot dogs, hummus, pork, chicken nuggets, chickpeas, beans, peas, chicken salad, fish sticks, hamburgers, tofu, soy milk, hemp milk, and protein powder made of milk. If you are a vegan, some protein alternatives are hemp protein, chia seeds, peas, edamame, rice protein, spirulina, kidney beans, and all varieties of beans. Alternatively, your child could buy the school lunch provided by Guess Who's Coming To Dinner. The school lunch provides a healthy protein at each meal it serves.

11. Is fast food safe to bring to school?

Yes. Fast food restaurants are safe with the exception of some dessert items such as sundaes with nuts on them, McFlurries or other milkshake-type drinks with peanut butter candy mixed in, and the Chick-fil-A brownie with nuts. If you are uncertain about the safety of a fast food item, you can check the restaurant's website. Fast food websites usually clearly list allergen information online.

12. Can I bring Chick-fil-A to school? It says "cooked in peanut oil" on the box.

Yes. Although Chick-fil-A chicken nuggets are cooked in peanut oil, they are safe to bring to school. Chick-fil-A uses a particular type of peanut oil that has had the allergy-triggering peanut proteins destroyed. Some allergists go so far as to say it is scientifically impossible to have a reaction from being exposed to the peanut oil used at Chick-fil-A. Although generally peanut oil is not safe, Chick-fil-A peanut oil is safe.

13. I usually send a cake or cupcakes to school for my child's birthday. Can I continue to do so?

Yes, unless your child's teacher has told you otherwise. (If in doubt, contact your child's teacher.) Baked goods from local bakeries such as Albertsons, Kroger (except for the muffins), Tom Thumb, Costco, Central Market, Casa Linda Bakery, and Dallas Affairs are all safe to bring to school. Some of the baked goods at these bakeries have labels that say, "processed in a facility" with nuts or "processed on shared equipment" with nuts. Items with these labels still comply with the nut-sensitive policy and are safe to bring to school.

Please note that items from these bakeries may not be safe for a peanut or tree nut allergic child to actually eat. If you know a child with a peanut or tree nut allergy is in your child's class, please contact the teacher before sending in one of these items.

Additionally, you are welcome to bring in a home-baked cake, either from scratch or from a mix with canned frosting. Cake mixes, canned frosting, and sprinkles are all safe to bring to school. Again, check with your child's teacher before bringing in one of these items if you know there is a peanut or tree-nut allergic child in your classroom.

14. Are doughnuts safe to bring to school?

It depends on what they're cooked in. Some doughnuts are cooked in peanut oil. Those doughnuts are not safe to bring to school. Additionally, some doughnuts have nuts sprinkled on top. These doughnuts are also not safe to bring to school. Krispy Kreme glazed doughnuts are not cooked in peanut oil and are safe to bring to school.

15. Is pizza safe to bring to school?

Yes. Pizza from anywhere is safe as long as it doesn't have pesto on it.

16. Peanut oil is on the list of items not to bring to school. What is it used for and how can I avoid accidentally sending it to school?

Peanut oil is used in sit-down restaurants to fry food and season griddles. Even then, it is seldom used. It is also sometimes used to fry doughnuts (but not at Krispy Kreme). Peanut oil is not used in baked goods or in packaged snack foods. It is also not used at fast food restaurants other than the hypo-allergenic peanut oil used at Chick-fil-A.

17. Peanut and tree-nut flour are on the list of items not to bring to school. What are they used for and how can I avoid accidentally sending them to school?

Peanut and tree-nut flours are used in protein bars and protein powders. They are also in some Kashi cookies. They are not in regular baked goods or breads and are not substituted for regular flour.