

One Minute Guide to Allergy Safety in the Early Years.

Creating a safe and inclusive environment for children with allergies is essential for protecting their health, wellbeing, and ability to fully participate in early years experiences. This guide provides a quick reference for practitioners working in early years settings, aligning with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) 2026 and relevant allergy management guidance. It highlights key practices to help ensure that allergies are effectively managed, risks are minimised, and all children are supported through clear communication, appropriate planning, and a confident response to allergic reactions.

Embedding Allergy Safety into Everyday Practice.

Having clear policies and procedures around allergy management is essential in early years settings. These guidelines help ensure consistency, support staff in knowing what to do, and protect children's health and wellbeing. Clear processes for identifying allergies, sharing information, managing risks, administering medication, and responding to allergic reactions help reduce risks and create a safe and inclusive environment for all.

Staff training is key to making sure policies are followed effectively. When team members understand their roles and feel confident in their actions, they can recognise allergy risks, follow individual care plans, and respond appropriately in an emergency. Ongoing training helps keep knowledge up to date and embeds allergy safety into everyday practice.

Young children rely on adults to help keep them safe, so it is important that allergy awareness is integrated into daily routines. When staff consistently follow safe practices, encourage good hygiene, and support children to understand their own needs where appropriate, it helps build a culture of safety and inclusion.

Allergy safety is a shared responsibility. When staff, families, and children work together and follow agreed procedures, risks are reduced and concerns can be addressed quickly. This collaborative approach helps create a safe, inclusive environment where every child can participate fully, enjoy mealtimes, and thrive.

Key principles for allergy safety.

Policy and Procedure.

- Develop clear policies and procedures for allergy management and emergency responses.
- Regularly review and update allergy policies to reflect changes in children's needs and current guidance.
- Ensure all staff understand their roles and responsibilities in managing allergies.
- Maintain accurate and accessible records of children's allergies, care plans, and medication requirements.
- Ensure a Paediatric First Aid trained staff member is present at all times and that staff know how to respond to anaphylaxis.
- Carry out regular risk assessments for activities involving food and allergens.
- Develop contingency plans for staff absence, ensuring that anyone purchasing, preparing, handling, or serving food is aware of children's dietary requirements, allergies, and intolerances.

Allergy Identification and Information Sharing.

- Gather detailed information about allergies, intolerances, and dietary needs before the child starts.
- Create and follow individual Allergy Action Plans for children with diagnosed allergies.
- Share allergy information and action plans with relevant staff while maintaining confidentiality.
- Clearly identify children with allergies through agreed setting procedures.
- Regularly update information on allergies, intolerances, dietary needs, and prescribed medication.
- Establish effective communication systems between staff, parents/carers, and other professionals.

Food and Mealtime Safety.

- Check ingredient labels every time food is purchased, prepared, or served.
- Ensure food provided meets each child's dietary and allergy requirements.
- Prevent cross-contamination through effective food preparation, storage, cleaning, and serving practices.
- Assign a nominated staff member to check that the correct food is provided for children with allergies.
- Supervise children closely during mealtimes and snack times.
- Ensure staff are aware of children's allergies and remain vigilant for signs of an allergic reaction.

Staff Training and Awareness.

- Ensure all staff receive regular allergy awareness training.
- Train staff to recognise the signs and symptoms of allergic reactions and anaphylaxis.
- Ensure staff know how to administer prescribed emergency medication, including adrenaline auto-injectors where required.
- Provide refresher training and updates whenever a child's needs change.
- Include allergy management within staff inductions and ongoing professional development.

Emergency Response.

- Ensure emergency medication is readily accessible and stored according to care plan requirements.
- Follow individual Allergy Action Plans if a reaction occurs.
- Contact emergency services immediately when symptoms of anaphylaxis are present.
- Inform parents/carers promptly of any allergic reaction or concern.
- Record and review incidents to identify learning and reduce future risks.

Partnership Working.

- Work closely with parents/carers to ensure allergy information remains accurate and up to date.
- Support children, where developmentally appropriate, to understand their allergies and how to stay safe.
- Share key allergy information with supply staff, students, volunteers, and visitors as appropriate.
- Promote a whole-setting approach to allergy safety so that all staff contribute to keeping children safe.
- Foster an inclusive environment where children with allergies can participate fully in activities and mealtimes.

Further information and useful links

[Statutory guidance: Allergy safety in schools](#)

[Help for Early Years Providers: Food allergies and intolerances](#)

[NHS Guidance: Food allergies in babies and young children](#)

[Food Standards Agency: Free Food Allergy Training](#)

[Food Standards Agency: Allergen Checklist](#)

[Allergy UK](#)

[Anaphylaxis UK](#)



