



## NUT AND FOOD ALLERGY FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



### Q. Why is Edna Maguire a Nut Aware School?

- A. Many schools are becoming nut free or nut aware because the incidence of these potentially lethal allergies is increasing rapidly. Peanut allergies doubled in a 5-year period (1997-2002). More than 1 in 100 children have a peanut allergy and 1 child in 17 under age 3 has a food allergy. Peanut/nut allergies are particularly severe; ingestion of even tiny amounts can cause a severe **life threatening reaction**. **Avoiding** the offending allergen is the only way to prevent a potentially lethal allergic reaction. A nut aware school helps create a safer environment for everyone in the Edna Maguire community.

### Q. What does Nut Aware mean?

- A. Nut aware means you are being asked by the school to consider peanut/nut alternatives for individual student lunches and snacks out of consideration to our children with severe, life threatening allergies. Food brought to share or distribute **cannot** have any peanut or nut ingredients, including peanut/nut oils or peanut/nut flour.

### Q. How can it affect another child if my child brings a peanut butter sandwich to school?

- A. A child who has eaten or handled foods containing nuts can transfer the allergen containing oils to shared toys, tables, chairs, drinking fountains, playground equipment or even doorknobs.

### Q. What is an allergic reaction to peanuts or nuts like?

- A. Allergic reaction symptoms include (in general order of severity): vomiting, coughing, fatigue, severe rash, swelling of the face and/or throat, difficulty breathing, a drop in blood pressure and loss of consciousness. The more rapidly that symptoms develop, the more severe the reaction. Subsequent exposure to the allergen often causes a more severe and faster reaction.

### Q. Some children have dairy allergies. Why is it all right to send dairy products to school?

- A. Ordinarily allergies or intolerance to dairy products are not life threatening and are not triggered by ingestion of tiny amounts. Reactions to dairy products may include runny nose, stomachache, diarrhea or eczema, i.e., symptoms that do not require emergency medical intervention. In contrast, allergic reactions to nuts, especially peanuts are often life threatening.

### Q. Do you realize that this is inconvenient for me?

- A. Yes. If this were not potentially life threatening to some children, we wouldn't ask you not to send nuts to school. Your efforts are truly appreciated by those affected. Parents who deal with this every time their child puts a bite in their mouth know it is challenging, but it does get easier as you get used to it. We also know it is easy to forget when your family is not directly affected, so we will continue to provide food suggestions, helpful hints and reminders.

### Q. Do you have any nut free snack suggestions?

- A. Yes! Healthy, nut free snack ideas will be posted to the Nutrition and Wellness section on the Edna Maguire website.

**Remember:** if eating peanut butter or food with nuts for breakfast, be sure to wash hands and face thoroughly with soap and water before coming to school. (Purell is not as effective as soap & water).

THANK YOU for helping by taking the steps to ensure Edna Maguire is a healthy and safe place for all of our children. **Lisa Zimmer**