

Cary Alliance Church

Peanut and Tree Nut Allergy Guidelines

(As of January 5, 2010)

Introduction

According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion of the Centers for Disease Control¹:

“Food allergy is an abnormal immune response to certain food(s) that the body reacts to as harmful. Estimates of the prevalence of food allergies range from approximately 4% to 8% of children and 2% of adults. There are eight foods that account for 90% of all food-allergy reactions: cow’s milk, egg, peanut, tree nuts (for example, walnuts, pecans, almonds, and cashews), fish, shellfish, soybeans, and wheat. Combined, food allergies cause 30,000 cases of anaphylaxis, 2,000 hospitalizations, and 150 deaths annually.”

“The best method for managing food allergies is prevention by way of strict avoidance of any food that triggers a reaction.”

Why should peanut allergies be considered differently from other food allergies? *“What distinguishes a peanut allergy is the severity of the reaction. In some extremely sensitive individuals, ingestion of even trace amounts of peanut can stimulate a reaction. In severe cases, treatment must be administered at once to prevent a fatality.”*²

Given this reality, it is prudent for Cary Alliance Church (CAC) to take the steps to minimize the exposure and therefore the risk of medical emergencies resulting from peanut and tree nut allergies.

Biblical Perspective

Cary Alliance Church is committed to implementing policies that are consistent with Biblical teaching in all aspects of church life and governance. The scriptures do not directly address the issue of church peanut policies; however, the principles taught by the scripture relating to church life and governance are applicable. The following is a listing of some of the passages that provide the basis for developing a Biblical perspective about this issue:

Matt. 25: 34-40: The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Matt. 7:12: In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Rom. 14:15-20: If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. For the Kingdom of

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/foodallergies/index.htm>

² <http://www.peanutallergy.com/what-is-a-peanut-allergy.html>

God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food.

- Matt. 18:6: Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depths of the sea. (NASB)
- Gal. 6:2 Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. (KJV)

Principles

- Matt. 25: 34-40: Jesus clearly teaches that we should consider our interactions with other Christians to be interactions with Jesus himself. When we show mercy, compassion, or consideration to our spiritual brothers and sisters, we are showing the same to Jesus. Conversely, when we decline to show mercy, compassion, or consideration to even the least of our spiritual brethren, we are declining to show these to Jesus.
- Matt. 7:12: This is the golden rule. The principle that applies is, "How would we want the church to react if we or our children had a life-threatening allergy?"
- Rom. 14:15-20: This passage has as its immediate application the issue of eating food sacrificed to idols. However, it has historically been understood by the Church to apply to any activity that causes another spiritual brother or sister to stumble. The principle is to not engage in activities that causes harm to our spiritual brethren.
- Matt. 18:6: Context of this passage is Jesus commending childlike faith as great in the Kingdom of Heaven. He then issues the severe warning about causing one of these "little ones" to stumble. He continues with admonitions to remove anything (even hand, foot, or eye) that causes you to stumble.
- Gal. 6:2: We all can have burdens that seem overwhelming. Protecting a child with nut allergies, when nut products are so common in our society, can seem to be an overwhelming task. The Christian community should help bear this burden by taking reasonable precautions to minimize the risk of exposure.

Goals and Objectives

1. To demonstrate a Christlike attitude and behavior as we interact with one another.
2. It is understood that it is impossible to eliminate the risk of exposure by sensitive individuals to nut allergens. However, it is entirely possible to take reasonable actions that will significantly reduce the risk of exposure.
3. To apply basic risk management principles to addressing the issue. (e.g. Prioritizing risk events by their impact and likelihood and addressing the risks in priority order).
4. To provide guidance and direction to the CAC ministry leaders to work to minimize the risks from nut allergens to sensitive individuals, without attempting to specify in detail all of the actions that should be taken (i.e. separate policy from procedure).
5. To provide a framework and example that can be expanded if necessary to other allergens, such as shell fish, should CAC staff become aware that individuals that are sensitive to these other allergens participate in CAC sponsored events.

Policy Details

Children's Ministries

1. The Pastor of Children's Ministries shall develop procedures to minimize the exposure of children sensitive to nut allergens to those allergens while they are participating in CAC children's ministry events, such as Sunday School. (i.e. while they are under the supervision of CAC children's ministry workers rather than the direct supervision of their parents.) These procedures should include (but are not limited to) the following types of actions:
 - a) Labeling Children's Education rooms with appropriately worded signs intended to prevent nut products from entering the rooms.
 - b) Informing all children's workers and volunteers of this policy and these procedures and ensuring their agreement to abide by these procedures prior to their assignment to work with children.
 - c) Informing parents of children who participate in CAC children's ministries of the policy and procedures.
 - d) Ensuring that the parents of first-time participants in the CAC children's ministries are questioned to determine if their children have any allergies and the severity of the allergies.
 - e) Ensuring that children with allergies should wear an appropriate allergy alert sticker.
2. The director of Trinity Preschool shall develop procedures to minimize the exposure of children sensitive to nut allergens to those allergens.

Church Wide Events

1. In this context, a church-wide event is defined to be an event, such as a pot-luck dinner, that is open to the CAC congregation as a whole, and therefore it is impossible for the event coordinator to know if sensitive individuals will be participating.
2. At church-wide events, all children are under the direct supervision of their parents, and therefore, it is the parent's responsibility to assess the risk of exposure of sensitive children to allergens, and to take appropriate steps to minimize or eliminate that exposure.
3. For church-wide events where the food is under the direct control of a coordinator (person or committee), i.e. where the food is to be purchased, catered, or prepared under the direction of the coordinator, the coordinator shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that the food is nut allergen free.
4. For church-wide events where the food is provided by the participants (e.g. pot-luck dinners), the coordinator shall request that nut-free foods be provided by the participants, preferably as part of the event announcement or food sign-up process. However, for this type of event, the parents of sensitive children are advised that there is risk of exposure to nut allergens. i.e. A sign can be placed where the food is served advising that the food may not be nut free³.
5. Coffee Bar: The Sunday-morning coffee bar is considered as a special case of a church wide event. Since most of the food is provided by congregation members rather than

³ One might ask how this would help? The sign is to advise sensitive individuals and parents that it is not safe to assume that the food is nut free, while the request that only nut free food be provided is expected to decrease the percentage of nut-containing food dramatically, and thereby significantly decrease the risk of trace exposure.

purchased, the Deaconesses should request that people only provide nut-free items, but should post a sign on the coffee bar that the food served may not be nut free.

Use of Church Facilities by CAC Ministries for Targeted Events

1. In this context, a targeted event is defined to be an event, such as the Annual Women's Christmas Tea, where the coordinator (person or committee) can assess whether or not nut allergen sensitive individuals will be participating in the event. (i.e. If it is an adult only event, and all of the adults are known to be non-sensitive, then there will be no direct exposure at the event.)
2. Where the coordinator determines that sensitive individuals will be participating, then the coordinator shall follow the same precautions described above for church-wide events.
3. Where the coordinator determines that no sensitive individuals will be participating, then the coordinator shall ensure that adequate cleanup is performed after the event to remove food residue (including nut allergens).

Use of Church Facilities by non-CAC Ministries

1. This type of event is an occurrence, such as a wedding reception, where an outside party requests use of CAC facilities for a specific purpose and time, under the terms of the CAC building use policy.
2. Cary Alliance Church assumes no responsibility for food associated with this type of event.
3. The CAC building use coordinator shall ensure that all CAC facilities used by the non-CAC event shall be cleaned so as to remove food residue. (i. e. When CAC tables are used they shall be wiped down to remove all food residues, including nut allergens.)

Disclaimer

These guidelines are an act of service by the congregation of Cary Alliance Church to our members and visitors who may be sensitive to peanut and tree nut allergens, and their children. It represents our best understanding of the steps necessary to minimize the risk of exposure of sensitive individuals to nut allergens while participating at CAC sponsored events. However, it needs to be understood that it is not possible to eliminate the risks. Therefore, participants and parents of nut-allergen sensitive children, are advised to use their own best judgment with regards to any specific event, as to whether or not adequate precautions have been taken, and to not participate in the event if they have not. Nothing in this policy should be understood that Cary Alliance Church assumes liability in the event of a nut-related allergic reaction.