**Food Allergy Safety**

**What is a food allergy?**
A food allergy is when the immune system mistakes a harmless food protein as a threat to the body and attacks it. The protective reaction of the immune system causes allergic symptoms.

**What are the major food allergies?**
- Milk
- Eggs
- Fish
- Shellfish
- Tree nuts
- Peanuts
- Wheat
- Soybeans

**What are the symptoms of a food allergy?**
Even the smallest amount of an allergen, that you can’t even see, can cause a reaction. Reactions can range from mild to life-threatening (anaphylaxis) and can change over time, making them hard to predict.

- Itchy, scratchy throat or ears
- Rash or hives
- Stomach pain, nausea or vomiting
- Sneezing or coughing
- Diarrhea
- Swelling of the mouth or difficulty swallowing
- Trouble breathing or wheezing
- Turning blue
- Confusion, weakness, fainting, or loss of consciousness
- Chest pain

**How can I help keep myself and others safe?**
- Know how to read a food label. Read the ingredient list to look for allergens.
- Ask if homemade items contain certain allergens, and inform restaurants of your allergy.
- Be sure to thoroughly wash hands and surfaces before and after cooking and eating. Use different utensils, plates, and cutting boards while cooking to avoid cross-contamination.
- It is important to be prepared for an attack. Physicians may prescribe an epinephrine auto-injector in case of severe anaphylaxis. If someone has a reaction, it should be used as soon as possible, and call 911.
- Know if friends or family members have food allergies, and know the warning signs.