

WHEN EVERY BITE MATTERS

KNOW SOMEONE WITH FOOD ALLERGIES?

Here's What You Can Do!

We all know someone with a food allergy. Allergies are different for everyone, so what's the best way to be a good friend? Here are a few ideas:

- 1. Listen and understand.** When your friend tells you about their allergy, make sure to listen and ask questions. You must understand how severe the allergy is. If he/she is allergic to nuts and you bring a peanut butter sandwich for lunch, for example, make sure you don't sit with your friend. Depending on the severity of the allergy, you may need to wash your hands after lunch and before you can touch them again (e.g., for a handshake, game of tag).
- 2. Know how to recognize a reaction.** Reactions can vary greatly from person to person. Talk to your friend about what happens to them when they have a reaction so you can recognize it if you are with them.
- 3. Know where the auto-injector is located and how to use it.** Most auto-injectors have instructions on them, but if someone is having a reaction, every second counts. Your friend might have a trainer you can practice with. Of

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course, you will also need to know where your friend's medication is, so make sure they tell you where they tend to keep it.

4. **Look out for your friend.** Look out for your friend when you guys are doing an activity or going to a party together. You should also support your friend if they need to carry medicine. Remind them to have it with them and let them know they don't look weird!
5. **Support your friend if they experience peer pressure.** Sometimes even well-meaning people will try to pressure allergy sufferers into risky situations. For example, if all your friends want to go to a Thai restaurant and your friend with food allergies can't eat there because of all of the nuts, try to get your friends to eat somewhere else. Keep in mind a list of safe places your friend can enjoy. Also, try to stop anyone who might be teasing your friend about their allergies. People who joke about allergies don't understand how serious they are.
6. **"Close friends."** If you are the boyfriend or girlfriend of someone with allergies, you're going to have understand how to be safe when holding their hands and kissing them. If you drink a milkshake and then kiss someone

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who's allergic to milk, they'll have a reaction. Of course it feels embarrassing to talk about, but it's necessary to set the ground rules ahead of time!

- 7. Want more info? If you want to educate yourself about allergies, there are great resources online.** A great place to start is www.foodallergy.org.