

Activities from

Adulting With Food Allergies

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Avoiding Activities Due to Food Allergies

Fully participating in social gatherings and outings is an essential part of living life fully, successfully, and independently. Oftentimes, though, there are activities that they decline due to their food allergies (e.g., camping with the family of a friend). They are choosing to miss out and not fully participate in life due to food allergy concerns. Sometimes, logistical issues can make an activity off-limits (e.g., an unsafe restaurant), but many times it is actually the perceived embarrassment of having to manage food allergies in front of other people that make people avoid activities. Use this worksheet to identify what you are avoiding, what is causing the avoidance, and if there are ways you can work through the complications to participate safely in the activity. There may still be things that you need to avoid but putting thought into the process may allow you to say yes to more opportunities.

Activities I am avoiding:

List out activities you have been avoiding or are nervous to try.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Brainstorm: Brainstorm the complications that prevent you from participating in each activity and then try to identify ways to resolve them. For example, Can I do something to make it safer? Do I need to prepare differently? Do I need let others know about my food allergy restrictions?

Activity: _____

Identify the problems: Why, specifically, am I avoiding this activity?

Brainstorm Solutions: What can I do to manage those reasons for avoiding the activity?

Resolution: Is this activity something I need to continue to avoid?

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Social Situation Practice

As always with food allergies, it is good to think through situations that may come up so you can be ready to succeed. Here are some situations you may face that you can brainstorm ideas for handling. There are no wrong answers here; the key is to keep yourself safe.

Situation

You are on your new dorm floor and getting to know a couple of the other new students. One suggests that you all go out to the diner around the corner to grab some food.

What could you do?

Situation

You are out at a bar with a new date you met through one of your classes. You are hitting it off and they lean in to kiss you.

What do you do?

Situation

You are headed to a formal dance at the University Club with your rowing team. You are wearing a beautiful dress with heels. You have no pockets in your dress, of course.

What could you do about your auto-injector?

Situation

You are headed to a basketball game at the stadium with a couple of friends. You will be there for several hours and are not sure if the food there is safe for you. No bags are allowed in the stadium, someone told you.

What are some things you could do?

Situation

You are in an office with your boss, working on separate projects. You have just eaten a bag of cookies from the vending machine, and you are getting itchy, and your throat feels funny. You look at the bag of cookies and realize it may contain nuts.

What are some things you could do?

Situation

You are invited to a pot-luck barbecue at a friend's house to celebrate the end of the rec softball season.

What are some things you could do?

Roommates and Cross-Contact Problem-Solving

Think about the problems that you anticipate or have experienced living with others who do not have your allergies and identify possible ways to handle them. Below are a few specific exposure concerns and ways you might try to resolve them. Try to come up with other solutions.

Problem: Your dorm roommate wants to order pizza, and you are dairy allergic.

Solution Ideas:

1. Ask them to eat the pizza in a neighbor's room or the common room of the dorm.

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Problem: You are uncomfortable doing the dishes because of allergens in the sink.

Solution Ideas:

1. Wear disposable gloves and learn to take them off without contaminating your hands.

2. Offer to trade: Always unload the dishwasher if your roommates will load it or offer to be in charge of taking out the trash instead of washing dishes.

3. _____

4. _____

Problem: You have a messy microwave with spills and splatters that you worry about touching.

Solutions Ideas:

1. Ask your roommate to wipe down the microwave after they cook.
2. Learn how to clean a microwave and teach your roommate how to clean it, too.
 - a. Fill a microwave-safe bowl with 2 cups of water and 2 Tablespoons of vinegar.
 - b. Turn the microwave on high for five minutes.
 - c. Keep the door closed for 15 minutes to let the steam soften any foods.
 - d. Remove the turntable and wash.
 - e. Wearing gloves, wipe down the sides, door, bottom, and top of the inside of the microwave with paper towels and dispose of the towels.
 - f. Wipe down the inside with a wet cloth and baking soda and then rinse with a clean cloth.
3. Buy a small microwave for your personal use.
4. _____

Problem: Occasional alcohol use might affect the normally safe behavior of your roommates.

Solution Ideas:

1. Plan on a full clean after parties or other social gatherings before considering areas of the house safe.
2. Implement consistent rules so that they become a habit and are less likely to be forgotten.
3. _____

4. _____

Cross-Contact Problem:

Solution Ideas:

1.

2.

3.

Problem:

Solution Ideas:

1.

2.

3.

Living Arrangements Worksheet

Use the space below to organize your thoughts about living arrangements. Note how you feel about living in different situations with allergens. What are you okay with, not sure about, and definitely not okay with? After different living situations, note what did/did not work well so you can adjust your decisions as you go forward.

What I think about having allergens in the home:

Roommate Experience 1 - Date and Location _____

What did we agree to regarding allergens?

What worked well?

What were the problems?

What could I do differently? How do I feel about allergens in the home now?

Roommate Experience 2 - Date and Location _____

What did we agree to regarding allergens?

What worked well?

What were the problems?

What could I do differently?

How do I feel about allergens in the home now?

Roommate Experience 3 - Date and Location _____

What did we agree to regarding allergens?

What worked well?

What were the problems?

What could I do differently?

How do I feel about allergens in the home now?

Employment Situation Practice

Job Situation

You have been working at a company marketing landscaping work for about six months. Your boss messages you that she wants you to join a meeting scheduled with a builder that night. They are considering hiring the company to provide all the landscaping for their newly planned neighborhood, and she wants you to help market the idea. Dinner will be at 7:00 p.m. at a local seafood restaurant in the city. You have a severe allergy to seafood but didn't feel the need to mention it before.

Issues

It is a big work opportunity to be included in the meeting. You don't want to miss out on it, but equally, you don't want to eat at a restaurant where you don't feel safe.

Solution Ideas

1. As part of your proactive approach to dealing with allergies in the workplace, you have already identified local restaurants that you would feel comfortable eating at or at least attending for drinks. Tell your boss that the seafood restaurant would not be the ideal location for you, given that you have severe seafood allergies. Ask instead if it would be possible to switch locations to one that you have identified.
2. You decide you are comfortable being at the restaurant without eating. While it may feel awkward not to eat, this is a big opportunity, and you don't want to miss it.

3. _____

4. _____

Job Situation

Every Friday, your colleagues in the sales department head out to a diner for lunch. You have multiple allergies and don't feel comfortable eating out, especially at diners. You always make excuses for why you can't go.

Issues

Informal get-togethers with coworkers are not a required part of the job. However, missing out on these events means you don't get to experience informal team building, hear about work issues, and to network with others. Also, if your coworkers see you decline lunch every week without understanding why, they may stop including you in other groups and opportunities.

Solution Ideas

1. As discussed above, if you want to go to lunch with your colleagues, you'll need to find a place locally that you are comfortable eating in. Explain to a colleague or two that you can't really eat there but would love to join the group at a different location. Pick a day to meet up at one of those places.
2. Find other ways to connect with coworkers without food being the focus. Invite a couple of people to watch a sporting event, watch a movie, or go for a walk during lunch.

3. _____

4. _____

Job Situation

You work at a small business with one main office and a small break room that is part of a larger corporation. Everyone shares the fridge and eats together at noon when the office closes for an hour. A woman you work with brings a bag of shelled nuts for her lunch on most days, although she knows you have a nut allergy.

Issues

You don't feel safe in your work environment.

Solution Ideas

1. First, explain to this woman that you understand she prefers eating nuts, but for you this is a life-or-death situation and explain why. Ask her if she can think of any solutions. Maybe she can shell the nuts prior to coming to work then wash her hands after eating.
2. If the person refuses to change their habits, have a discussion with your supervisor.
3. Stress that you don't want to prohibit this person from ever eating nuts, but it is an unsafe situation for you, and you need help resolving the issue. If your supervisor refuses to help, then seek out the employee in charge of HR issues. That person may not be in your direct office but search your office website to find who you need to contact. An educational presentation on nut allergies might be useful.

4. _____

5. _____

Job Situation

Issues

Solutions

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

Brands and Products We Like

Most families have brands and products that work best for them. Here is a place to list them and to keep track of new products you discover.
