



# FOOD ALLERGY BULLYING THROUGH THE YEARS

## FROM TODDLERS TO TEENS



Food allergy bullying is an unfortunate phenomenon that happens more than you would think - and it can start at young ages.<sup>1</sup> Children are teased, ridiculed or even threatened. In some cases, incidences elevate to assault with food containing allergens, and the consequences can be fatal.<sup>2</sup>

It is important for parents to have ongoing dialogues with their kids about this nuanced form of bullying. Education should start early and continue throughout a kid's life because food allergy bullying can evolve and look different as children get older and school environments change.<sup>3</sup>

### THE EARLY YEARS

- ▶ Begin to lay the groundwork for positive interactions in the future by re-enforcing safe habits. For example, you could consider describing why you're serving grilled cheese vs. PB&Js because your child or their friend has an allergy to peanuts.
- ▶ Introduce the basic concept of safe interactions when teaching how to play with others and reinforce what behaviors to avoid.

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- ▶ Food allergy bullying through physical intimidation may escalate in grade school, and kids may begin to use psychological tactics, such as making fun of a food allergy or avoiding children who have them.
- ▶ As children begin to grasp more complex issues, lay the groundwork about food allergy bullying - further defining that children may be teased, excluded, or threatened with an allergen-containing food. Explain that this is unacceptable behavior, and the potentially deadly consequences of it.
- ▶ Explain precautions when around someone with a food allergy, including not sharing allergen-containing foods and washing your hands after eating.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL AND BEYOND

- ▶ In addition to physical and verbal bullying, older children may be able to food allergy bully in more elaborate forms - through a prank or on the internet.
- ▶ In one study, half of children (22/44) with food allergies in grades 6-10 reported being bullied, teased or harassed.<sup>1</sup> This is a time to reinforce the foundations learned in elementary school.
- ▶ Be on the lookout for signs your teen is being bullied, such as sudden anxiety about attending school, or eating alone. Encourage them to talk about interactions that happen at school or on social media.

To learn more visit [NoAppetiteForBullying.com](http://NoAppetiteForBullying.com) and help raise awareness of the campaign by using [#NoAppetiteforBullying](https://twitter.com/NoAppetiteforBullying).

This content was developed by the No Appetite for Bullying founding partners and represents the views of these groups.

1. Lieberman JA, Weiss C, Furlong TJ, Sicherer M, Sicherer SH. Bullying among pediatric patients with food allergy. *Ann Allergy Asthma Immunol.* 2010;105(4):282-286. pmid:20934627. 2. Shemesh E, Annunziato RA, Ambrose MA, et al. Child and parental reports of bullying in a consecutive sample of children with food allergy. *Pediatrics.* 2013;131(1):10-17. doi:10.1542/peds.2012-1180 3. Sicherer S, Mahr T, et al. Management of Food Allergy in the School Setting. *Pediatrics.* 2010;126(6):1232-1239. doi:10.1542/peds.2010-2575