



Potential Food Allergens in Preschool and School Activities

According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, "food used in lesson plans for math or science, crafts, and cooking classes may need to be substituted depending on the allergies of the students".¹

Below is a list of some unexpected places you can encounter common food allergens, along with alternatives and precautions that can be used. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list; it is a general guide only and is not inclusive of every potential food allergen. Please verify all ingredients yourself by contacting the manufacturers as ingredients may change.

Activity/Materials	Allergen(s)	Potentially Safe Alternatives and Appropriate Precautions
Play-Doh® (commercial or wheat-based homemade)	Wheat	Crayola® Model Magic® Modeling clay (NOT modeling dough) Moon Sand Homemade rice- or buckwheat-based play dough Other sensory materials such as goop, slime, and ooblick Use a homemade playdough or ooblick that is safe for your child: - Cornstarch playdough - Edible playdough - Rice playdough -Ooblick recipe: 1 1/2 cups corn starch, 1 cup water, food color (optional). Mix the ingredients together; as children play with the mixture it will be solid when they squeeze it and liquid when they release it.
Macaroni art (wheat)	Wheat, egg	Rice macaroni Quinoa macaroni
Counting/sorting beans, grains, pasta, M&Ms® or other small foods	Potentially all	Counting/sorting foam, wood or plastic beads, or other small non-food items. Read ingredient labels to choose food items with safe ingredients.
Sensory tables that use grains, pasta, candies or other small foods	Potentially all	Use non-food items or read ingredients to choose food items with safe ingredients



Activity/Materials	Allergen(s)	Potentially Safe Alternatives and Appropriate Precautions
Tempera paint (homemade and some very high-end commercial)	Egg	Commercial finger paint Crayola® Kids Paint Most commercial paints suitable for children
Finger paint	Pudding finger paint may contain milk. Laundry soap or laundry starch mixed in with finger paints to make them thicker. Laundry starch may contain corn, laundry soap may contain allergens.	Read ingredients to find milk-free finger paints. Laundry starch or soap can be omitted if avoiding corn. Read ingredients to find a safe laundry soap.
Crayons	May contain soy	Read ingredients to find soy-free crayons
Crayola® Wonder	Soy	Use a non-soy based ink
Craft paste	May contain wheat starch	Elmer's® Glue sticks Read labels to determine if wheat starch is present.
Shaving cream	May contain milk	Read ingredients to find a milk free shaving cream
Ooblick, oobleck, goop, slime	May contain corn	Create mixture using tapioca starch instead of corn starch, or read ingredients to find a safe version
Bird feeders	Peanut butter Wheat in birdseed mix Nut oils in seed mix	Consider making a hummingbird or butterfly feeder instead, using sugar, water and food coloring. Use soy nut butter or sunflower butter Regular Crisco® (contains soy oil) or other safe hard shortening Honey Seeds or seed mix without wheat seeds or nut oils



Activity/Materials	Allergen(s)	Potentially Safe Alternatives and Appropriate Precautions
Planting seeds	Legume seeds (such as beans, peas or peanut) Corn kernels Egg shells or egg containers that are sometimes used as "pots" to germinate seeds	Any other seeds Use other safe pots to grow seeds
Baking projects	Potentially all	You can share lots of safe recipes and request to participate in any baking activities.
Paper mache	Wheat	Elmer's® glue solution Buckwheat flour solution
Birthday and holiday celebrations	Potentially all	Non-food celebration (songs, goodie bags, stickers) You can provide safe cake or cupcakes for the class.
Making butter	Dairy	None
Making maracas or shakers	Some legumes	Fill maracas or shakers with rice, popcorn, or sand.
Projects using empty egg cartons, milk cartons, yogurt containers, etc.	Egg Dairy	You can provide safe empty containers for the class. One place to purchase new egg cartons is www.eggcartons.com





Activity/Materials	Allergen(s)	Potentially Safe Alternatives and Appropriate Precautions
Hand-washing (teachers and children)	Soaps, liquid soaps, hand wipes, diaper wipes and hand lotion may contain many allergens including wheat, dairy, soy and/or nut extracts including shea nut. Cloth towels may contain food residue.	Read soap, liquid soap, wipe and lotion labels to determine if allergens are present and choose a safe brand. Use paper towels to dry hands. Use safe wipes to clean hands.
Musical instruments	Allergens will be present on mouth-blown musical instruments.	Remove mouth-blown musical instruments from classroom. Provide a designated set of mouth-blown instruments for your child's use only.
Play kitchen	Empty "real" egg cartons, cereal boxes, etc. will contain allergens.	If used, you can provide safe "real" containers to replace allergenic ones.

References:

1. American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (1998). Anaphylaxis in schools and other child-care settings. Accessed August 2007, http://www.aaaai.org/media/resources/academy_statements/position_statements/ps34.asp.

