

Discovery Center Position on Food Allergies

Definition: Allergic reactions are an immune-system hypersensitivity to a particular substance called an allergen.

For many allergic individuals, exposure to an allergen results in mild symptoms. But for some people, allergic reactions can be life threatening. The most dangerous symptoms include difficulty breathing and a drop in blood pressure, which are potentially fatal. Called anaphylaxis, this severe and lightning-fast allergic reaction may affect children with known allergies and those without known allergies.

Between 1 percent and 2 percent of people are at risk for anaphylaxis from food and stinging insects. The most common allergens, accounting for 90 percent of allergic reactions, are milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, and soy, according to the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (www.foodallergy.org).

With thousands of visitors each week, it is not possible to maintain an allergy free environment within the museum, nor in its outdoor environments. Therefore, these guidelines depend on those with food allergies to be responsible for their own age-appropriate education and self-advocacy. Those with potentially serious allergies should recognize the inherent risks of attending a public community space frequented by very young children and others who are unaware or unaccustomed to the needs of people with food allergies.

Discovery Center seeks to support those with food allergies in the following ways:

- Guests are encouraged to use designated eating areas within the museum.
- Exhibits, exhibit manipulatives, educational rooms, and celebration areas are cleaned on a regular basis.

Parents/caregivers of children visiting the museum are reminded that children in their care should:

- Refrain from trading or sharing food with other children
- Only consume food in designated eating areas.
- Refrain from eating foods with unknown ingredients or known to contain any allergens.
- Be aware of allergen exposure risks.
- Wash hands before and after eating.