

Let's Play Sports!



Signing up for little league, soccer, dance or any group activity is something many kids love to do. Thankfully, team sports and group activities often ask about food allergies on sign-up sheets. This helps us, as parents of food allergic children, open the conversation with leaders and coaches.

It's always best to address shared snacks and celebrations before the season begins. We need to be partners in this process. Being proactive and helpful makes for less mishaps and hurt feelings in the future. All kids want to be a part of their team. No one enjoys feeling left out or unsafe. We want to set the team up for success, while safely including everyone.

What happens when another teammate's parent forgets about a player's food allergies? Sometimes people think foods are safe when they are not. We have to remember, there is a learning curve when it comes to managing food allergies. This can be challenging for someone who is not used to it.

Below is a role-playing activity for a common situation: a post-game spontaneous cupcake celebration. This example demonstrates the best-case scenario for what can be an awkward situation. Take the time to talk about other ways to navigate these moments and ways to address them. Knowing these situations might occur helps to prepare our children to handle them with confidence.

Activity:

It's post game time on the field! Everyone is jumping up and down after a big win. Here comes a tray of cupcakes.

Characters:

Coach
Parent
Team

Coach: "Great job today! What a wonderful win. You played so well together! I'm really proud of your hard work."

Team: "Thanks Coach! That was so much fun!"

Parent: "What a game! I brought these cupcakes for you to celebrate!"

Team: "Awesome! But wait, are they safe for the twins?"

Parent: "I think so. They don't have any nuts on them."

Coach: "I appreciate your thoughtfulness, but I can't give these to the kids. We have a list of snacks the team can safely enjoy. Cupcakes, or any homemade baked goods, are not on the list. Thank you for understanding."

Parent: "That's right! I completely forgot about the list. I am so sorry! It's no fun if everyone can't enjoy them!"

Team: "You're right! It's not fun if we can't all enjoy them."

Parent: "I completely agree! Next time, I'll check the list the twins' parents sent out. I'm sorry about this mistake!"

It is important to remember that these conversations may not always go as smooth as this one does. Take the time to talk about other ways to navigate such moments. In case a last-minute food celebration does occur, review other ways to handle this situation more effectively in the future. Tell your child you will speak with the coach. You will remind the coach about the seriousness of food allergies and the importance of being safely included on a team.