



Udi's PTA Survey on Food Allergy

OVERVIEW

A survey was conducted among parents of elementary and middle school children, as well as teachers of elementary or middle school utilizing PTA's database.

HIGH LEVEL FINDINGS -

Parents believe that food allergies are extremely prevalent and much more common than when they were children.

- Over 3 in 4 surveyed parents (**76%**) say that food allergies are common at their child's school and among their child's friends
- Nearly all surveyed parents – **94%** – agree that food allergies are more common in their child's schools than when they were in elementary and middle school
- Over 1 in 3 surveyed parents (**36%**) say their child has a food allergy
- Nearly 3 in 4 surveyed parents (**74%**) say their child has at least one friend or classmate with a food allergy

Elementary and middle school teachers also report the same trend in their schools.

- **83%** of surveyed teachers say food allergies are very or somewhat common in their school
- Nearly 3 in 4 surveyed teachers (**74%**) say they currently teach at least one student with a food allergy
- While peanuts are the most prevalent food allergy that parents see affecting their children and their children's friends and classmates, other food allergies are also very common.
- The most common food allergies that affect surveyed parents' children and their children's friends/classmates include peanuts (**84%**), milk (**49%**), tree nuts (**48%**) and gluten or wheat (**47%**)
- Surveyed teachers also report these as the most common allergies, peanuts (**80%**), milk (**47%**), tree nut (**45%**) and gluten or wheat (**37%**)
- Nearly half of surveyed parents (**47%**) say their child or their child's friends/classmates have a gluten or wheat allergy or celiac disease

While a peanut allergy is the scariest for parents, they perceive a gluten/wheat allergy as the most difficult to manage on a daily basis.

- Surveyed parents most commonly say a peanut allergy is the scariest or most threatening food allergy that a child can have (**67%**); however, they most commonly said that a gluten/wheat allergy is the most difficult to manage on a daily basis (**44%**)



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Parents are making several changes in how they supply snacks in order to accommodate kids with allergies – they're selecting different snacks, they're providing multiple types of snacks and going with store-bought versus homemade.

- 4 in 5 surveyed parents (**80%**) have provided different snacks for their child's classroom than they would have liked to in order to accommodate food allergies
- Nearly 3 in 4 surveyed parents (**72%**) have provided multiple types of snacks to their child's classroom to accommodate kids with allergies
- **69%** of surveyed parents have provided store-bought snacks to their child's classroom versus homemade options to accommodate allergies

Some parents are even taking more extreme measures – reducing how often they bring snacks, shopping at different stores and avoiding sending kids with allergies to activities so they don't put them at risk.

- **37%** of surveyed parents have shopped at a different store to find snacks that accommodate kids with allergies
- **25%** of surveyed parents have reduced how often they provide or stopped providing snacks to their child's classroom to avoid allergy issues
- **17%** of surveyed parents have avoided sending their child with a food allergy to an afterschool or weekend activity because they didn't want to put them at risk

Teachers are taking extreme measures as well, including purchasing snacks on their own and in some cases, asking parents to stop bringing snacks altogether.

- **71%** of surveyed teachers have purchased snacks on their own to provide to kids with allergies so they don't feel left out during snack time
- **38%** have asked parents to stop bringing snacks altogether to protect kids with allergies or reduce kids feeling left out
- Over 1 in 4 surveyed teachers (**28%**) have been frustrated with parents for not being more understanding of kids with food allergies at their school

While the majority of parents are educating their kids about food allergies, some have still seen kids being made fun of for their food allergy.

- **82%** of surveyed parents have talked to their kids about food allergies and why they are important
- **15%** of surveyed parents have overseen or heard a child making fun of another child for their food allergy



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When it comes to supplying snacks to the classroom, parents and teachers believe that they should try to find something that everyone can enjoy.

- **68%** of surveyed parents and teachers say that other parents should do everything they can to accommodate kids with food allergies in the classroom and find one snack that every kid in the classroom can enjoy versus purchasing a “special” snack for kids with allergies (**23%**)
- Nearly 1 in 10 surveyed parents and teachers (**9%**) believe that parents should just purchase the snack they want for their kid’s classroom and not make any special accommodations for kids with food allergies

When it comes to the types of snacks parents are providing to their kids’ classrooms, parents say they’re opting for fewer sweet treats, but teachers tell a different story.

- Surveyed parents say the snack they most commonly bring is pretzels, chips or crackers (**51%**), followed by fruit (**44%**); only **37%** of surveyed parents say they commonly provide cake or cupcakes, and **36%** say they provide cookies
- Surveyed teachers say the most common snack is cake or cupcakes (**55%**), followed by pretzels, chips or crackers (**51%**), followed by cookies (**47%**); Only **31%** of surveyed teachers say parents commonly bring in fruit



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The National PTA survey was conducted in August 2013 and polled 3,186 members – 2,917 parents; 567 teachers.
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