



Summer Allergy Tips

Summer Means Barbecues, Picnics and Food Allergy

Ants, bees and rain aren't the only things that can put a damper on a picnic or barbecue. For more than 12 million Americans food allergy can ruin the fun too, by causing problems ranging from the mild (itchy bumps and stomach aches) to the severe and life-threatening (swelling of the throat and difficulty breathing).

Be food allergy savvy at your next picnic, whether you are planning the event or have food allergies yourself. Drs. Ford and Brooks of The Asthma & Allergy Center are allergists, doctors who are experts at diagnosing and treating allergies and asthma. Drs. Ford and Brooks and the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology offer the following tips for keeping food allergies off the menu:

- **Consider condiment packs** - Instead of large containers of condiments, use individual-sized packets of ketchup, mustard, relish and mayonnaise. These condiment packs will prevent cross contamination that can occur when sharing large containers.
- **Pack foods separately** - When preparing for a get-together away from home, pack allergic and non-allergic foods in separate containers.
- **Use a plastic tablecloth** - In addition to dressing up your barbecue or picnic, a tablecloth prevents guests from coming in contact with any allergy-causing food particles left on the table from previous meals.
- **Provide a serving utensil for each food item** - Separate utensils help reduce cross contamination between dishes. And be sure you have enough plates, cups, napkins and utensils so no one will have to share.
- **Carry medications** - If you or a loved one has had allergic reactions to food in the past, be sure to have emergency medications on hand just in case unrecognized food allergens are hiding in picnic treats.

- Serve allergic guests first** - Grill foods for guests with allergy first, or cook the items on a fresh piece of aluminum foil. Also, allow guests with allergy to dig into the food first, before cross-contamination of items can occur.
- Remember the wipes** -For get-togethers in forest preserves and other natural areas, soap and water might be tough to come by, so come prepared with disinfecting wipes and anti-bacterial gel. Cleaning hands and faces after eating helps reduce the likelihood of allergy-causing food particles being passed during play.
- Check cell phone coverage**- If your picnic or barbecue is away from home, be sure you can get a cell phone signal in the area to call 911 if someone has a severe allergic reaction.

If you are a loved one experience an allergic reaction to food, it's important to see an Asthma & Allergy Center Physician, who can pinpoint which food is causing the reaction and develop a plan for avoiding it.

For more information about allergies and asthma, visit www.AllergyAndAsthmaRelief.org.