



# Managing Food Allergies At College: A Student's Guide

College may be the first time that you are living on your own as a young adult. Taking on full responsibility for your food allergy may seem like a challenge, but with the proper preparation, knowledge and support, you can manage your food allergies successfully. Take the time to understand your responsibilities and learn about the resources your college has available.

## Keep On Top of Your Healthcare

An important part of managing your food allergies is having a plan for your healthcare.

- Your school may have a health center where you can get medical care and prescriptions. If they don't, know which doctor and pharmacy you'll use, and make sure you always have a current prescription for an epinephrine auto-injector. Carry your epinephrine and other emergency medication with you at all times. You can download a free FARE Emergency Care Plan for your doctor to fill out at [www.foodallergy.org/faap](http://www.foodallergy.org/faap).
- If you are 18 or older, consider whether giving a trusted adult healthcare power of attorney is right for you. In the event you are unable to communicate, this would give that person the ability to give and get information about your health and make healthcare decisions. For more information and healthcare power of attorney forms, visit [www.americanbar.org](http://www.americanbar.org).





## Work with Disability Services

Did you know food allergies may be covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)? Disability services can be a valuable partner to students with food allergies by helping them stay safe and included.

- Once you've decided on a school, discuss your food allergies with the disability services office immediately. The earlier the college understands your needs, the better chance you have of a smooth transition to college life.
- Work with disability services to find mutually agreeable solutions for managing your food allergies on campus. They may need to be your advocate for setting up accommodations and emergency plans with resident life, dining services, health services and academic life.
- Keep an open line of communication throughout your time on campus. Tell them what's working well and what's not. If a problem arises, reach out to disability services immediately. Remember—they won't know there's a problem unless you tell them about it.

For more information about food allergies and the ADA, visit:

[www.ada.gov/lesley\\_university\\_sa.htm](http://www.ada.gov/lesley_university_sa.htm)



## Get to Know Dining Services

Even if you have accommodations set up through your school's disability services office, it is important to meet and communicate directly with dining services staff as well. They'll be working daily to provide safe food, so you'll want to establish and maintain a relationship with them.

- As early as possible, have an in-person meeting and discuss your food allergies with the person in dining services who manages the school's food allergy plan. This will usually be a director, manager, registered dietitian or chef.
- Keep an open line of communication with dining services. Let them know what's working and when you experience challenges in dining. If you experience an allergic reaction, follow up with dining services after you've received proper medical care.
- Never take chances by eating or drinking something with no ingredient information. Ask questions about what you can and cannot eat in the dining hall.

## Live Safely in Your Dorm

Living in a dorm can be a great opportunity to make new friends and enjoy new experiences. By communicating your food allergy needs to your resident advisor (RA) and roommate(s), you can create a healthy, safe environment.

- Talk with your roommate about how you will handle food storage and preparation, as well as eating, in your dorm.
- Share your Emergency Care Plan with your RA and, if the school allows, show your RA how to use your epinephrine auto-injector.
- Consider sharing your Emergency Care Plan with your friends and roommate(s) and demonstrating how to use your epinephrine auto-injector.

## Plan for Your Social Life

College is a time of new experiences, and it will be tempting to take risks with your food allergies. Plan ahead to avoid unnecessary risks.

- Drinking alcohol can be risky because most alcoholic beverages do not have ingredient labels. Alcohol can also increase risk-taking behaviors.
- You may find yourself eating at restaurants or attending catered events. Contact the restaurant or caterer in advance to make sure they can accommodate your food allergies. Bring FARE's Food Allergy Alert Chef Cards with you to restaurants and send them ahead of time to caterers. You can download cards at: [www.safefare.org/chefcard](http://www.safefare.org/chefcard)

## Seek Out Support

Check with your school to see if there is a group for students with food allergies, celiac disease, other dietary restrictions or medical concerns.

If there isn't a group, consider starting one or joining the FARE College Food Allergy Support Group on Facebook for online support.

## For more information and tips, visit [www.foodallergy.org/collegeprogram](http://www.foodallergy.org/collegeprogram)

