

## Top 10 Tips for Food Preparation for School Age Children and Older

1. **Make a Theme**-- You can use different cultures or different holidays around which to base meals. For added fun, you and your children can create decorations to suite the theme.
2. **Create Choice**-- When planning the week's menu, solicit your child's input in regards to what meals/snacks he/she would like to have this week. If your child is limited, presenting the discussion in ways like "Would you like me to make A for dinner on Tuesday or B?"
3. **Get Your Child Involved**-- Prepare one meal or more a week that involves your child helping to cook or prepare some food that is safe for him/her, based on age-appropriateness
4. **Options**--- For snacks have a box of safe and healthy snacks already divided into single-serving bags (safe crackers/pretzels, etc). Children can choose their own snacks from the safe box at snack time.
5. **Learn About Labels**-- As your child is learning to read, teach him/her how to read labels to see if a food might be safe for him/her. Older children can help to research brands to find safe foods
6. **Sticking to The Safe Stuff!**-- Using stickers to identify safe vs. unsafe can still be a useful tool for some older children
7. **Two Chefs in the Kitchen**-- Have older children help to select recipes based on the ingredients in the house, so that they can learn how to safely and successfully cook for themselves; have the children prepare the recipes they select
8. **Be Our Guest!** -- Have a friend or group of friends over for a fun night. Instead of ordering pizza or going out to eat, have the kids make pizza, tacos, or some other kid-savvy food with previously prepared safe foods (be sure to check the allergy lists of guests!)
9. **Practice to be Prepared!** -- Practice scenarios with your child to help him/her learn coping mechanisms and responses to be used when in social situations around allergens. Help him/her learn how to respond to unsafe food being offered to him/her and how to concisely explain his/her allergies when necessary for safety reasons.
10. **If you have concerns that your child is experiencing food aversions or has a medical issue that is interfering with his/her ability to eat in an age-appropriate way**, it is very important to inform all of his/her doctors (Allergist, pediatrician, gastroenterologist) in case further evaluation is warranted.