

healthy kids, happy families

Parents

Get Set for School!

staying healthy

the new food rules

Nut-free schools. Treatless birthday bashes. Restaurant menus with asterisks. As food-allergy rates have soared, the way we feed all kids looks a lot different than it did even a few years ago.

by KELLEY KING HEYWORTH photographs by MEIKO TAKECHI ARQUILLOS

The call came into Jenness Stock's office from the kindergarten room downstairs: A student couldn't stop coughing—could the nurse take a look at her? Stock, who at the time oversaw 650 students at two Waukegan, Illinois, public schools, found the little girl coughing noisily between sips of water. In her classroom, the other kids were eating African and Asian dishes as part of a cultural-studies unit.

"My tongue feels too big for my mouth," the girl said. Her face was red around her lips, and Stock's heart skipped a beat. "Food allergy," the nurse instantly thought.

Stock raced back to her office and saw the child had no allergy paperwork on file, much less a prescribed EpiPen, the injectable form of epinephrine, widely used to halt a severe allergic reaction. Luckily, Stock had two spare EpiPens in her office—and a standing order to use one in this very sort of instance. She grabbed one and sprinted back to the classroom, where the girl had begun to develop hives across her face. "Hold my hand, honey, this is going to hurt," said Stock, and she jammed the tip of the injector into the girl's thigh through her cotton pants. The child yelped, but within minutes her coughing subsided and the red patches started to fade. An ambulance soon arrived to take her to the hospital for observation. Later, an allergist

confirmed that she had a previously unknown allergy to the peanut.

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