

Kids, travel, and food allergies



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Your child is travelling abroad for the first time and you're not going with them. Plus, they have a food allergy. What do you do?

Even during the best of times, planning a trip can be stressful. If your child has food allergies though, you will want to make more time for planning. Getting your child ready to travel on their own is a great opportunity for them to take an active role in their health away from home. Pre-trip planning can also be a fun way to learn about the destination's foods, cultures, and languages so that you will know what to expect.

Get started on research

Ask your child to research the country's foods, common ingredients, and traditional dishes. Review with them which foods could cause an allergic reaction. During the hustle and bustle of the trip, your child will better remember why they can't eat a certain food or meal that is offered to them and can be more confident about refusing it.

Your child can also embark on an adventure by learning some basic phrases including how to communicate food allergy requests in another language. Along with food allergy translation cards from [SelectWisely](#) or the [Allergy FT app](#), being able to communicate a few important phrases to waiters and chefs develops independence which can go a long way to help your child make the right food decisions.

Role playing

Ask the tour guide or chaperone how the mealtime and snack times are structured. Will the child only be eating in restaurants or will someone in the group cook the food and prepare snacks? Start a discussion with your child about the different scenarios they may encounter and how they plan to deal with each of them. To make it fun, do some role playing that incorporates these scenarios when you're having breakfast or dinner. You may also want to go to a restaurant (preferably one that specializes in foods from the destination country in case the ingredients are unfamiliar) so that your child can practice ordering food with their translation card or app.

Anxiety and peer pressure

While the tour guide or chaperone will know about your child's food allergies, it's important that your child tells everyone around them about their food allergies. This is easier said than done. Sometimes kids forget, are too shy, or embarrassed about asking for special requests relating to their food allergies. Openly discuss their anxiety to find a solution that fits their personality.

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On the other hand, your child may be frustrated that they're the only one in the group that can't eat certain foods. Actively involving them in pre-trip planning can help them discover foods that they can eat at their destination. This will help build their confidence in choosing the right foods and not only junk food. Talk to the tour guide or chaperone about your child's anxiety and the steps they plan to take to create an environment where everyone respects each other's special needs.

Don't forget to visit the doctor

Bring your child to the doctor to make sure that they're fit to travel and that their routine immunizations are up-to-date. Some travel-related vaccinations may also be recommended for the trip.

Don't forget to tell the doctor about the length of the trip so that they can prescribe allergy medications such as inhalers, antihistamines, and epinephrine injectors for the duration of the trip. Find out how to [travel well with medications](#). You may also want to access a list of [English-speaking doctors abroad](#) and discuss with your child what they need to do in case of an emergency and how to alert their tour guide or chaperone. Your child should also carry a [traveller clinical record](#) outlining their food allergies so that doctors abroad are aware of their condition.

If your child does not have a medical alert bracelet, this would be a good time to get it.

A note on food safety

Kids with allergies will want to stay away from buffets since there is an increased risk of cross-contamination. Also, if cooking is involved, the tour guide or chaperone will want to be alert to food packaging that does not list ingredients. In many countries there are non-enforced food labelling regulations and some products may be partially labelled which could put your child at risk.

Having food allergies doesn't have to prevent your child from traveling and discovering the world. Before you know it, they may get the travel bug for life! 🇺🇸

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Helpful checklists on travelling with food allergies:

[KidsHealth](#)

[FARE - Food Allergy Research and Education](#)