

## Calvary Chapel Old Bridge Children's Ministry Food Allergy Guidelines

Food allergies can be extremely serious, and several beloved families within the church have children whose allergies are not simply a matter of food preference or sensitivity, but a matter of life and death. As we pray about a Children's Ministry guideline regarding food allergies, we have turned to the Scripture for direction. Consider these two passages:

***Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.***

*1 Corinthians 8:13*

***Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.***

*Philippians 2:3-4*

In the hopes of not making our brothers stumble over food, and in making every effort to esteem others better than ourselves, the leaders of the Children's Ministry have developed the following set of guidelines to help keep those with food allergies as safe as possible:

1. **There has been, and will continue to be NO FOOD permitted in Children's Ministry classrooms and worship areas before, during, or after classes and common worship periods.** This has been our long-held standard. Teachers, teachers' children, students, and aides are not to bring food into classrooms. Furthermore, no one is permitted to eat food on the way into or out of the Children's Ministry. Those who are seen eating in the halls or walking in with food will kindly, respectfully, and gently be asked to return such food items to their vehicles for the safety of all of our children.
2. **All teachers and aides are to wipe down all tabletops with Lysol disinfectant wipes prior to each class.** These wipes will be available in each classroom.
3. **All children and teachers, upon entering a classroom, will be asked to take a fragrance-free hand wipe (provided by the entrance to the classroom), wipe their hands, and dispose of the wipe in the wastepaper basket on their way in to class.** This hand-wiping procedure is already instituted at Calvary Christian School prior to students utilizing the playground, and will be applied within the Children's Ministry for two reasons:
  - a. To prevent possible food allergens, consumed at home or on the way to church, from being inadvertently transferred between children.
  - b. To enhance our overall illness-prevention and hygiene practices, in an effort to prevent further spread of viruses, bacteria, and other germs. We currently have students and some parents who are immune-compromised, and taking these precautions can actually save lives.

These guidelines will be followed by all Children's Ministry servants, teachers, aides, worship leaders, and students attending all Children's Ministry services, including Wednesday evenings, AWANA on Saturday night, and both Sunday morning services.

The Children's Ministry wants the children of CC Old Bridge to experience God without hindrance, particularly because the Children's Ministry is the primary church experience for our young people. Participation in the Children's Ministry is largely deemed involuntary, and as such we want remove all possible hindrances to the worship experience of children and parents.

What's more, Calvary Chapel Old Bridge is undertaking a video project to further educate the body of Christ about a Biblical approach to handling food allergies. This project is designed to inform and to educate all ministry leaders and the body of Christ about allergies, and to embolden the church to lead the way in esteeming the needs of others before ourselves in this area, just as we do when ministering to countless other specific needs within the body of Christ.

While these are the guidelines of the Children's Ministry, it is understood that ministry leaders have some discretion regarding offering food at ministry meetings and activities. With few exceptions, ministry leaders may determine what, if any, foods will be offered at their respective ministry meetings, and parents, as always, can decide whether or not their children should participate in such activities.

While avoiding all possible food allergens at all times is difficult in a church our size, with simple steps like those outlined above, and with a firm mind toward education, the church can make tremendous strides to protect all of our children, while maintaining our freedom to enjoy fellowship and fulfill the ministries to which God has called us.