

Get the Sillies Out! *Learn to Say, “No thank you!”*



This activity is designed to have you and your child laughing while practicing these three empowering words, **“No thank you!”**

Have you ever had a relative or family friend at a party insist you taste or try their special treat? Usually the food looks delicious, making it even more tempting. “Just try it!”, says your relative/friend. “There’s no {insert allergen} in it. Do not be so worried. Go on and take one!” Our relative wants everyone at the party to indulge and enjoy themselves. It feels rude saying no. But for someone with food allergies, taking chances could lead to a serious allergic reaction.

We all know relatives and/or friends mean well. They worked hard on their signature dish; however, it has been a year since you have last seen this relative/friend. Does the relative/friend remember everything there is to know about your food allergies? If you are unsure, the best response is a firm, **“No thank you!”**

It can feel very intimidating saying “No” to an adult or friend who wants to share their food, especially when everyone is raving about how good it tastes. How many times do adults offer little ones a treat to make them happy? This happens quite a bit, especially at large family gatherings. The earlier children with food allergies learn to say, **“No thank you!”**, the safer they will be.

Let’s have some fun while practicing this important self-advocacy skill.

You will need:

- Items for disguise such as a hat, sunglasses, scarf, etc.
- Pretend food made of plastic or paper
- Serving tray
- Safe snack to share

Set the stage:

It is a picnic or a family reunion. Everyone is bringing their favorite dishes to share. In comes the parent or sibling dressed as your relative/friend. Try and hold back the laughter as the person in disguise enters the room.

Your relative/friend offers her fancy food, in a very tempting way. The child exclaims, **“NO THANK YOU!”** as firmly as possible. Try different disguises and offerings. Be as convincing as possible, when offering the food!

Test your relative’s food allergy knowledge:

What are the ingredients? Was there any chance for cross-contact with your allergens? Were the utensils, prep area, and cooking surfaces clean and sanitized before use? What about the mixer and baking trays?

That is a lot to consider, right? Your relative may not be so sure, and that is o-kay! They might have forgotten one of these important steps. ***This is your child’s cue that your relative’s food may not be safe to eat!*** The right thing to say is, **“No thank you!”**

Try switching roles! Have the child dress in disguise as your relative/friend. The parent or sibling can be the person with food allergies at the party.

Through the laughter and silliness, important work is happening. You are building confidence for real life encounters. The earlier a child with food allergies learns how to firmly say, **“No thank you!”**, the better. Practicing through play helps our children safely navigate different social situations with confidence. Remember to reinforce all the positive choices your child made while playing!

When finished, you can share your own safe snack with one another. This is also a great reminder to be prepared when attending parties or gatherings. Always bring a stash of safe foods or treats with you, so your child does not feel left out if something like this does happen!