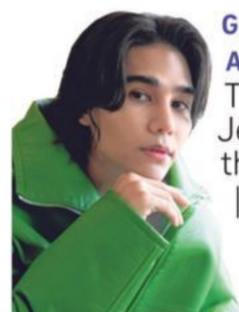
### **TEEN FRIENDSHIPS**

Bonds which can last a lifetime | c3



**GLOBAL AMBITIONS** Thai star Jeff Satur thinks big C4



I HAVE NO REGRETS

Confinement's Cynthia Koh

on not having kids **C5** 



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Caring for kids with food allergies

# TRIGGERED BY A KISS



While pre-schools are getting better equipped in looking out for children with allergies, parents hope that there is more support from the greater community



**Amelia Teng** Assistant News Editor

Ms Candace Zhou distinctly remembers when she suspected her older daughter, Eva, was allergic to

One of her family members had just eaten a slice of bread with peanut butter and kissed Eva, then three years old, on her cheek.

"She broke out in rashes on her face and felt itchy," says Ms Zhou,

37, a public servant. When Eva fell asleep in their living room on another occasion,

she woke up with an itch as a result of peanut crumbs left on the couch. And once, while overseas, she

vomited and had a high fever with hives, after accidentally eating a cashew nut. After a few tests, the family discovered Eva, who is now nine,

was allergic to peanuts, tree nuts

and shellfish. She also has a dust Ms Zhou's younger daughter Matilda, who is three, was previously allergic to eggs. But she has since outgrown it after going through a home therapy pro-

gramme with medical supervision. Food allergies in children are on the rise, with hospitals recording more cases in recent years.

Egg is the top food allergen in children below two years of age, and other common allergens include cow's milk, peanut and shellfish.

Food allergies occur when the immune system wrongly identifies food proteins as being harmful and causes a reaction against them.

# WHAT PRE-SCHOOLS DO

Pre-schools are now more aware of children with food allergies and

how to cater to them. My First Skool (MFS), which is operated by NTUC First Campus (NFC), has seen a wider range of food allergies and sensitivities among children in recent years,

# She broke out in rashes on her face and felt itchy.



### MS CANDACE ZHOU (above),

on the reaction of her elder daughter Eva (second from right), then three years old, after getting a kiss from a family member who had just eaten a slice of bread with peanut butter. Eva was later diagnosed with allergies to peanuts, tree nuts and shellfish. They are seen above with Ms Zhou's husband Matthew Siew and their other children, Matilda (left) and Noah

ST PHOTOS: GAVIN FOO

says an NFC spokeswoman.

Parents are advised to share the medical memo from doctors on their children's allergy and what can be done in case of an allergic reaction.

"The information will be useful for our teachers to make the necessary preparations and also have the knowledge to respond to these potential situations," she says.

MFS, which has 156 centres, also has an allergy emergency response

plan that teachers follow, including taking the child to seek immediate medical attention if necessary.

"First aid training is a mandatory course for all MFS educators, and the teachers will be able to administer first a silver ribbon below the school aid when neces- logo to inform teachers that sary," says the the child has an allergy. spokeswoman.

NFC's other brand, Little Skool-

Little SkoolHouse's uniform has

House (LSH) with 20 centres, excludes common allergens such as nuts and seafood - with the exception of fish - from its menu.

The centres work with parents to manage their children's allergies, food intake and health, says the spokeswoman.

In very severe cases, parents may provide all the meals for the child.

Children with allergies have tags sewn onto their uniforms as a

visual reminder. Ms Sharon Teo, head of preschools at Star Learners Child Care, says two-thirds of its 43 centres have had more children with food allergies enrolled in the past

five years. Among these centres, there is an average increase of three to five

cases a centre. Since 2018, it has worked with

food manufacturing firm Tiffin Gourmet to provide allergen-free menus on top of its regular and vegetarian menus, she

Children with very specific allergies are allowed to bring their food from home.

She adds that children with allergies are moni-

tored more closely and their details are prominently displayed in the pre-schools' kitchens, common dining areas and/or classrooms.

"During mealtimes, the class teachers keep a close eve on these children and make sure they do not consume any food item that is not meant for them," says Ms Teo.

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