

# Managing Food Allergies

A Guide for Schools



# Food Allergies are Serious!

- ◆ 35-50% of allergic reactions that progress to anaphylaxis are the result of food allergens
- ◆ 60% of those cases were caused by nuts (peanuts & tree nuts)
- ◆ 16-18% of children with food allergies have had an allergic reaction in school
- ◆ 25% of all anaphylaxis cases in schools occurred in children with no known food allergies

# What is a Food Allergy?

- ◆ A bad reaction (from a specific immune response) that occurs when exposed to a type of food
- ◆ In people with food allergies, the body mistakenly responds to food as if it were harmful
- ◆ Allergies to food can cause responds that range from mild to severe and life-threatening

Drag picture to placeholder or  
click icon to add

◆ In the United States, the following eight foods or food groups cause 90% of serious allergic reactions:

- ① Milk
- ② Eggs
- ③ Seafood
- ④ Shellfish
- ⑤ Wheat
- ⑥ Soy
- ⑦ Peanuts

(CDC, 2016)

# Signs & Symptoms of Allergies

- ◆ Red watery eyes or swollen lips, tongue, or eyes
- ◆ Itchiness, flushed skin, rash, or hives
- ◆ Nausea, pain, cramping, vomiting, diarrhea, or heartburn
- ◆ Nasal congestion, sneezing, trouble swallowing, dry cough
- ◆ Numbness around mouth
- ◆ Deep cough, wheezing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, or chest tightness
- ◆ Pale or bluish skin color, weak pulse, dizziness or fainting
- ◆ Confusion or shock, low blood pressure, or fainting
- ◆ Sensing “impending doom,” irritability, change in alertness, or mood changes

# Food Allergies & Children

- ◆ Signs & symptoms can start within a few minutes or up to 1-2 hours after exposure to an allergen
- ◆ Children may not be able to describe their symptoms clearly because of their age or developmental challenges
- ◆ It is hard to predict how severe the reactions to food allergies because they depend on the child's health history and:
  - ◆ How sensitive they are to the food
  - ◆ The type and amount of exposure to the food

# What Children Might Say

- ◆ “It feels like something is poking my tongue”
- ◆ “My tongue (or mouth) is tingling (or burning)”
- ◆ “My tongue (or mouth) itches”
- ◆ “My tongue feels like there is hair on it”
- ◆ “It feels like a bump on the back of my tongue (or throat)”
- ◆ “It feels like there’s something stuck in my throat”
- ◆ “My tongue feels full (or heavy)”
- ◆ “My lips feel tight”
- ◆ “It feels like there are bugs in my ears (for itchy ears)”
- ◆ “My mouth feels funny”

# Be Ready for Emergencies

- ◆ Be alert and ready to respond to food allergies when they happen
- ◆ If children eat the food, it usually causes a more severe reaction than inhaling it or having it on their skin
- ◆ Children with asthma are at a higher risk of having a severe allergic reaction and of entering anaphylactic shock
- ◆ Mild or moderate symptoms (itching, sneezing, hives, or rashes) are often treated with antihistamines, steroids, and/or asthma inhalers





**CALL  
911**

- A severe allergic reaction that happens quickly and may cause death
- Usually occurs within minutes after exposure
- IMMEDIATE MEDICAL INTERVENTION REQUIRED (Mayo Clinic, 2016)

# Recognize Anaphylaxis

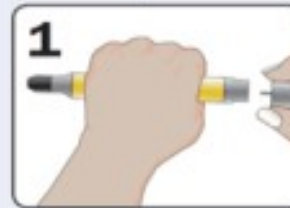
- ◆ Skin reactions, including hives along with itching
- ◆ Flushed or pale skin usually happens
- ◆ A warm or hot sensation
- ◆ A weak & rapid pulse
- ◆ Sensing a lump in the throat
- ◆ Narrowing of the airways and a swollen tongue or throat can cause wheezing or trouble breathing
- ◆ Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- ◆ Dizziness or fainting

# Treat Anaphylaxis

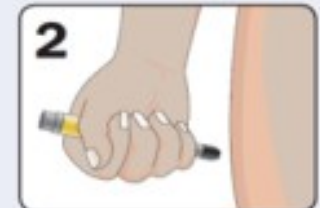
- ◆ The first thing to do is **Give Epinephrine (EpiPen)**
- ◆ Early use of epinephrine for anaphylaxis improves a person's chance of survival and quick recovery
  - ◆ Rapidly improves breathing
  - ◆ Improves heart rate
  - ◆ Reduces swelling of the face, lips, and throat
- ◆ Once administered, call 911 even if symptoms have resolved
- ◆ **Up to 20% of anaphylactic reactions return within 4-8 hours** (CDC, 2016)

**Lay the person flat to ensure safety!**

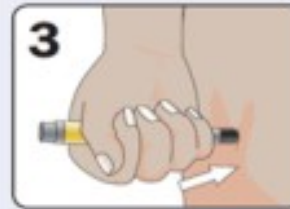
## How to give EpiPen® or EpiPen® Jr



**1**  
Form fist around EpiPen® and PULL OFF GREY SAFETY CAP.



**2**  
PLACE BLACK END against outer mid-thigh (with or without clothing).



**3**  
PUSH DOWN HARD until a click is heard or felt and hold in place for 10 seconds.



**4**  
REMOVE EpiPen® and DO NOT touch needle. Massage injection site for 10 seconds.

# How to Administer an EpiPen

**After steps 1 - 4 are complete call 911!**

# Develop a School Treatment Plan

- ◆ If an allergic reaction or anaphylaxis occurs:
  - ◆ Call the school nurse at \_\_\_\_\_ OR call the \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_
  - ◆ Refer to the health form that is filed in the classroom, lunchroom, and/or health office
  - ◆ For **SEVERE** symptoms - Give epinephrine if you have been trained
  - ◆ If students have medications in the school office for this reason, and you are allowed to give them, **USE THEM**

# Manage Food Allergies

- ◆ Helping students manage food allergies takes a **team effort** with school staff, parents, and emergency health services
- ◆ Parents are an important resource for health questions
- ◆ The school nurse is available for questions, training, and resources
- ◆ Know your school's Emergency Treatment Plan and health policies. If you are a substitute teacher, read the Emergency Plans at the start of the day





- Review with students the signs & symptoms of allergic reactions
- Stress the importance for the child to voice any possible symptoms
- Reassure students that you will help with their allergy

# What Teachers Can Do



- ◆ Ask parents to provide a list of foods and ingredients their child must avoid
- ◆ Keep information readily available about each food-allergic student in your class (This is helpful for substitutes & adjunct staff)
- ◆ Make sure the child eats in a **Safe Zone** - such as a Peanut Free Table
- ◆ Discourage students from trading food
- ◆ Post allergy safe signs outside of the classroom door & near the snack cupboard
- ◆ Send out a letter to parents explaining allergies and listing approved snacks



# Summary

- ◆ A food allergy is an adverse health reaction from a specific immune response that happens when exposed to a certain food
- ◆ Common food allergies include: milk, seafood, shellfish, peanuts, tree nuts, wheat, milk, and soy
- ◆ Common symptoms may include: itchiness, dry cough, swollen lips or tongue, rash, and shortness of breath
- ◆ Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that can result in death & requires immediate treatment with epinephrine
- ◆ After giving epinephrine - CALL 911 even if symptoms have resolved

# References

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016). *Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies In Schools and Early Care and Education Programs*. Retrieved from [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/foodallergies/pdf/13\\_243135\\_a\\_food\\_allergy\\_web\\_508.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/foodallergies/pdf/13_243135_a_food_allergy_web_508.pdf)

Mayo Clinic. (2016). *Anaphylaxis*. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anaphylaxis/basics/symptoms/con-20014324>

NPS MedicineWise. (2016). *Adrenaline Autoinjector (Anapen) for Acute Allergic Anaphylaxis*. Retrieved from <https://www.nps.org.au/radar/articles/adrenaline-autoinjector-anapen-for-acute-allergic-anaphyl>

Adapted from a Powerpoint originally developed by Deziree Earney, RN Student October, 2016.