

# Allergies

<a href="#">Definition</a>	<a href="#">Role of the School Nurse</a>
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**Last Reviewed 01/03**

**Definition:** An Allergy is 'an immune response to a foreign antigen resulting in inflammation and organ dysfunction'. An allergic response ranges from mild to life threatening and can include anaphylaxis, laryngeal edema, bronchospasm, urticaria, and rhinitis. (Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary) The more common allergies found in a school setting are to food, insect bites and latex, and to indoor allergens such as chalk dust, pesticides, animal dander, indoor mold.

In an allergic reaction, the immune system recognizes a specific protein as a problem and initiates a response resulting in the release of chemical mediators such as histamine. These chemicals trigger inflammatory reactions in skin (itching, hives, rash), the respiratory system (cough, difficulty breathing, wheezing), the GI system (vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain) and the cardiovascular system (decrease in BP, heart rate, shock). Anaphylaxis is a systemic response.

## **Role of the School/School Nurse:**

- The School Nurse should be familiar with the school food service policies at their school.
- The Student Individual Health Record must be current with the PCP's verification of the allergy, severity of the allergy and recommended treatment.
- Establish a 504 plan as needed.
- An IHP and Emergency Plan should be prepared for students with severe allergies.
- The decision of whether or not the student is able to carry and self-administer epinephrine, should be made jointly by the student's provider, family, student and school nurse.
- Key staff should be familiar with the Emergency Plan and emergency drills held as needed.
- A full-time school nurse should be available in the school when there is a student with a life-threatening allergy. If that is not possible, appropriate staff must be trained by the school nurse in the care of the student and must be competent to respond to the emergency situation.
- Auto-injectable epinephrine (or epinephrine by vial per standing orders if there is a full-time school nurse available), should be **readily available** for students in case of an emergency.
  - The medication orders must be renewed
  - The epinephrine should have a shelf life for at least one year,
  - The medication orders must be renewed annually,
  - The expiration date should be checked periodically,

- For student's who have had an anaphylactic reaction, staff should be taught that they should administer the medication after the student has had contact with the harmful allergen,
- Obtain from the parents,
- Provider documentation of the