

Allergies

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Definition: 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 (hives), and rhinitis (Taber’s Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary). The more common allergies found in a school setting are to food, insect bites, and latex. Others include indoor allergens (triggers) such as chalk dust, pesticides, chemicals, animal dander, mold, and outdoor seasonal allergens.

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/or the cardiovascular system (decrease in BP, heart rate, shock). Anaphylaxis is a systemic response. There are some valuable resources at the Food Allergy website at www.foodallergy.org/.

Role of the School/School Nurse

- The School Nurse must be familiar with the SAU protocols related to students with allergies (food, animal, latex, and insect).
- The School Nurse must be familiar with school food service protocols related to students with allergies.
- The Student Individual Health Record must be current with the PCP’s verification (good for 12 months) of the allergy, severity of the allergy, and recommended treatment (Allergy Action Plan).
- Students with allergies and their parents must be notified that the student may be entitled to a 504 Plan as determined by the SAU 504 Team.
- An Individual Health Plan (IHP) and Emergency Action Plan (EAP) should be prepared for students with severe allergies. The IHP details the school nurse’s role in the care of the student with the allergy. The Emergency Action Plan must be shared with staff working with a student with a severe allergy.
- The decision of whether or not the student is able to carry and self-administer epinephrine must be made jointly by the student’s provider (verification/education), family (permission), student, and school nurse (assessment of safety to self-carry and student demonstration of skills).
<http://www.maine.gov/education/sh/contents/index.html> (Go to Protocol/Contract for Epi-Pen)
- Staff should be familiar with the Emergency Action Plan and emergency training should be held annually and 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 (Epinephrine use and always call 911).
- If there is a full-time school nurse in the building, auto-injectable epinephrine should be **readily available** for students in case of an emergency or epinephrine by vial per standing orders. Staff must be made aware of where the auto-injectable epinephrine is stored for students with severe allergies.
 - The physician medication orders and parent request/permission form must be renewed annually.
 - The epinephrine should have a shelf life of at least one year.
 - The expiration date should be checked periodically.

- All staff who may come in contact with the student should know where the medication is stored (locked cabinet), how to retrieve it, and how to administer it.
- If a student has had a **documented** anaphylactic reaction, staff should be taught to administer the epinephrine immediately after exposure/contact with the harmful allergen (even before symptoms appear), and must call 911.
- Obtain from the parents:
 - Provider documentation of the allergy.
 - Permission forms to administer medication.
 - Epinephrine medication.
 - Information about the student's allergy.
 - Emergency contact information.
 - Physician contact information.
 - Permission to speak to the treating physician.
- Encourage the family to obtain a medic alert bracelet for the student.
- Provide education and training on allergies to all staff who may be in contact with the student. This should include:
 - Teachers, office staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, custodians, coaches, playground personnel, and before/after school aides/ed. techs.
 - Educate new personnel as they come into school during the school year.
- The education should include:
 - Understand the law for school personnel responding to an emergency (MSRS 20-A §4009(4) Chapter 42 Resolve at www.maine.gov/legis “Emergency medical treatment. Notwithstanding any other provision of any public or private and special law, any non-licensed agent or employee of a school or school administrative unit who renders first aid, emergency treatment, or rescue assistance to a student during a school program may not be held liable for injuries alleged to have been sustained by that student or for the death of that student alleged to have occurred as a result of an act or omission in rendering such aid, treatment or assistance. This subsection does not apply to injuries or death caused willfully, wantonly or recklessly or by gross negligence on the part of the agent or employee.”)
 - Have staff view this training video (30 minutes) <http://www.allergyhome.org/schools/food-allergy-school-staff-training-full-length-module/>.
 - Review of symptoms of allergies and severe allergic reactions.
 - Review district emergency procedures.
 - Bus driver(s) must have a method of communication for emergency calls.
 - Manage the potential exposure to allergens as much as possible through accommodations plans including individual health plans, emergency action plans, 504, or individual education plans.
 - Encourage students to educate their friends/peers.
 - Provide classroom health education as appropriate. Video for classroom use. http://www.allergyhome.org/schools/food_allergy_awareness_for_school_kids/
- Preparation for field trips must be made in advance. <http://www.foodallergy.org/managing-food-allergies/at-school/field-trips>
 - Clearly label the location of the epinephrine in the emergency pack.
 - Designate a trained staff person to be responsible for the administration of epinephrine and the immediate response plan.
 - Provide school staff and bus drivers with information about the student's allergy management plan and any necessary precautions.
 - The bus driver must have a method of communication for emergency calls.
 - Allergy Plan/Emergency forms and epinephrine medication should be packaged for all students with a known allergy.

- Hand wipes should be available for use before and after eating.
- Local Emergency Medical Services should be informed of any student with a life-threatening allergy at the beginning of the school year.
- Students with allergies must be included in school activities and not excluded because of allergy.

Food Allergies

Guidelines should be established with cooperation of the family, student, staff, food service, bus drivers, and school administration.

- Individual plans must:
 - reflect the severity of the student's allergy;
 - include allowable foods within the classroom or school and allow a separate allergen-free cafeteria table and/or classroom;
 - specify necessary emergency response and appropriate treatment.

Classroom protocols:

- The parent or guardian of a student with food allergies should be responsible for providing classroom snacks for their child. These should be kept in a separate container.
- Sharing or trading foods should be prohibited.
- Parents should be notified that there is a student with life-threatening food allergies in the class/school and identify the restrictions in bringing certain foods to school including lunches, parties, and snacks.
- Students should be instructed to use proper hand washing techniques.

Education of food services staff should include:

- Developing allergy safe menus and snacks;
- Vending machines and food content;
- Food product labels and ingredients;
- Food handling;
- Cleaning and sanitation;
- Retaining labels for each food served for 24 hours after the meal in case of an allergic reaction.

Education of Custodial staff should include:

- The need for cleaning and the type of cleaning solutions appropriate for use.
- All surfaces, including classroom tables and desks to which the student has access, should be washed morning or night after food has been present.
- Cafeteria tables should be washed between lunch sessions and after meals.

Education of Bus Drivers:

- Must have a method of communication for emergency calls.
- Must know where an individual student's emergency medication is located.
- Trained in the administration of epinephrine following an individual student's allergy plan.

Insect Stings Allergies

Schools must have in place an Integrated Pest Management Plan that includes the identification and removal of insect nests, management of garbage, etc. to reduce the presence of insects.

Latex Allergies

It is recommended that latex gloves, chalk, balloons, or other latex products not be used in schools.

School nurses should become familiar with the list of foods that contain latex including carrots, tomatoes, and avocados.

Resources

Staff Training

Training videos for school staff, students, and families

<http://www.allergyhome.org/schools/management-of-food-allergies-in-school-what-school-staff-need-to-know/>

Quiz for school staff to receive contact hours after the training/video

<http://www.allergyhome.org/schools/food-allergy-quiz-and-certificate-of-completion/>

Video for classroom use http://www.allergyhome.org/schools/food_allergy_awareness_for_school_kids/

Bath School Administrative Unit Staff Training Resource

http://www.rsu1.org/departments/health_services_/health_and_wellness_staff_training/

MSAD #11 Food Allergy protocol www.msad11.org

Student/Family Education

What parents need to know about food allergies <http://www.allergyhome.org/schools/food-allergies-in-school-what-parents-need-to-know/>

Video for classroom use http://www.allergyhome.org/schools/food_allergy_awareness_for_school_kids/

General Resources

US CDC Food Allergies <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyouth/foodallergies/>

Food Allergy Tools for Schools <http://www.allergyhome.org/schools/> (Michael Pistiner, MD, Harvard Medical/Boston Children's Hospital)

National Association of School Nurses Toolkit for Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis

<http://www.nasn.org/ToolsResources/FoodAllergyandAnaphylaxis>

Field Trip Guidelines <http://www.foodallergy.org/managing-food-allergies/at-school/field-trips>

Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE)

http://www.google.com/aclk?sa=l&ai=C94SWDFbxUqijBsbj6QGjIICQBeOEIpIEs--27Va--a_xBggAEAMoA1DlGocEYMn-o4mMpNQPoAHtyNbXA8gBAaoEIk_QZDJU4-E2g1YE39ZCiCOFjYILKOKIL2XUkv8yECM9pCKAB_u2qSiQBwI&sig=AOD64_3Db9a_10Ai7RZU-q7IU1VoMPoCqQ&rct=j&frm=1&q=food+allergy+and+anaphylaxis+network&ved=0CD0Q0Qw&adurl=http://www.foodallergy.org (make this a hyperlink)

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America www.aafa.org/

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology <http://www.aaaai.org/>

Managing Life Threatening Food Allergies in School, Massachusetts Department of Education

<http://search.doe.mass.edu/search.aspx?q=allergies>

(Sample letter to educate parents about life-threatening allergies.)
Please remove and place your school header here.

Date _____

Dear Parent,

This letter is to inform you that a student in your child's classroom has a severe _____ allergy. It is important that there is strict avoidance to this allergen in order to prevent a life-threatening allergic reaction. We are asking your help to provide the student with a safe school environment.

Any exposure to _____ may cause a life-threatening allergic reaction that requires emergency medical treatment. To reduce the chance of this occurring, we are asking that you do not send any products containing this allergen to school.

If your child eats any of these before coming to school, please be sure your child's hands and face are thoroughly washed and teeth brushed before entering the school.

(When appropriate insert examples or specific procedures developed for this student's allergy.)

We appreciate your support of these procedures. Please complete and return this form so we are certain you have received this information. Please contact the school nurse if you have any questions.

(Teacher, Principal, School Nurse)

(cut here and return bottom portion to school)

- I have read and understand the _____ allergy classroom procedures.
- I agree to do my part in keeping the classroom allergen free.

Child's Name _____
Classroom Teacher _____
Parent's Signature _____
Date _____

(Sample letter for a parent with a child with a severe allergy)
Please remove and place your school header here.

Date

Dear Parent,

We are aware that _____
(Child's name)
has an allergy to _____.
(name of allergen)

In order to help the school provide a safe environment for your child, there is certain information that will be useful. Please provide the following information to the school:

- Obtain and return to the school nurse an allergy plan with written medical documentation, instructions, and medications as directed by a physician.
- Provide an Epi-Pen for the school in case of an emergency.
- Send safe food for your child to eat during snack time and special occasions.

Other things that would be helpful in caring for your child at school are:

- ❖ Continue to educate your child about their allergy including what foods are safe and unsafe, to tell an adult if they are experiencing symptoms of a reaction, not to trade foods with another other students, and to eat only foods that have been identified as safe.
- ❖ Review food allergies and the emergency plan with your child's teacher, school nurse, bus drivers, and coaches.
- ❖ Review the cafeteria menu to be sure the foods offered are safe for your child.
- ❖ Call the food service director _____ at _____ if you have questions about the menu.
(phone)
- ❖ Contact me if you have any other questions. _____

(Print Name and Phone)

Sincerely

(Name of School Nurse)