

AN ALLERGY AWARE SCHOOL

Studies have shown that food allergy affects 10% of children up to 1 year of age; between 4-8% of children aged up to 5 years of age and approximately 2% of adults. Hospital admissions for severe allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) have doubled over the last decade in Australia, USA and UK. In Australia, admissions for anaphylaxis due to food allergy in children aged 0 to 4 years are even higher, having increased five-fold over the same period.¹

The most common food allergies are peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, almonds, cashews etc), shellfish, cow's milk, fish, wheat and eggs.² Many children will 'outgrow' their food allergies, however reactions to nuts, seeds and seafood tend to be lifelong.³

The symptoms of food allergy range from mild to life-threatening and anaphylaxis is the most severe form of allergic reaction.

The Problem with Nuts

- Peanuts and other nuts are the most likely foods to cause anaphylaxis,
- Nuts are hard to avoid due to their widespread use,
- Nut allergies tend to persist. That is, less than 1 in 5 children will 'outgrow' their nut allergy,
- Only a small amount can trigger symptoms (even trace amounts).⁴

Why Is It Important That Schools Become Allergy Aware and Allergy Friendly?

- In Australia, more than 90% of fatal reactions to food have occurred in children aged 5 years and older.⁵
- Of those who have died from anaphylaxis, 90% have been allergic to nuts, the exposure was accidental and usually away from the home (including at school).⁶

We need to accept that food allergies *are* serious and that food allergies *can* be fatal.

As a result of this situation we are taking steps to become an 'Allergy Aware' school by informing staff, parents and students about the associated risks of these food allergies. Below are some guidelines, which will assist parents, students and staff to maintain an awareness of these allergies.

The following information is based on guidelines produced by the NSW Department for Education and Training with the NSW Department of Health, the Australian Society for Clinical Immunology and Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia. They are practical strategies, which require small changes to provide a much safer environment for children with allergies:

Sharing lunches

- Regular discussions with relevant classes about the importance of eating your own food and not sharing.
- Junior School Classes have lunch in a specified area, which is a focus of supervision (it is not recommended that the allergic child be physically isolated from other children).
- **Ask parents not to send high-risk foods to school in the lunch box.**

The school canteen

- Inform canteen staff of student/s with allergies and the foods to which they are allergic.
- Identify high-risk foods and replace with other nutritious foods.
- Food preparation personnel (paid and voluntary) should be educated about measures necessary to prevent cross contamination during the handling, preparation and serving of food.

Class Parties

- **Advise the parents of the students at risk of food allergies ahead of time so that they can provide suitable food.**
- Inform other class members' parents of high-risk foods so that these foods are avoided.

In the classroom

- Teachers should be asked to avoid bringing high-risk foods to school.
- Be aware that craft items can be risk items (for example, egg cartons, milk containers, peanut butter jars).
- Choose recipes that don't contain high-risk ingredients for cooking lessons.
- Consider non-food rewards.

On Camp

- If students with severe allergy are participating, then high-risk foods should not be taken or supplied (consistent with the risk minimisation policy in the school canteen).

General Issues

- **Ideally lunch for the allergic child should be prepared at home.**
- **Bottles, other drinks and lunch boxes should be clearly labelled with the name of the child for which they are intended.**
- Encourage staff and students to wash their hands after eating.
- The students with severe allergies should wear a medic alert bracelet.

Current Living Waters Practices

- Students with severe food allergies have Epi-pens, contained in a visible, red and black waist bag stored in the medical room. Additional Epi-pens are located in each sub-school and another in the PE office.
- Staff are educated on how to administer an Epi-pen.
- Photographs of students with severe food allergies are placed in various locations around the school, so that all members of the College community are able to identify students who are at risk.
- Staff communicate to parents the dangers of students bringing to school high risk foods.
- Frio Wallets (to keep Epi-pens cool during extreme temperature) are available for excursion/camps.
- Spare emergency use Epi-pens are sited around the College in the PE Office, Home Economics room, Nurse Room, Large First Aid Kit Bag and the Science Laboratory Preparation Area.

The school cannot say it is 'free' of allergy causing products, such as nuts, as this is not possible given the size of the school community but it strives to be 'allergy aware'.

For more information on Food and Nut Allergies

- Anaphylaxis Australia Phone: 1300 728 000 Website: www.allergyfacts.org.au
- Health Direct Website: <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/anaphylaxis>
- Australasian Society for Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA) Website: www.allergy.org.au
- NSW Department of Education and Training Phone (02) 9561 8000 Website: www.det.nsw.edu.au
- Allergy Capital Website: www.allergycapital.com.au
- Peanut Allergy.com(UK) Website: www.peanutallergy.com

References

1. ASCIA Food Allergy Information Sheet 2016.
2. ASCIA Food Allergy Information Sheet 2016.
3. ASCIA Food Allergy Information Sheet 2016.
4. ASCIA Peanut, tree nut and seed allergy Information Sheet 2017
5. Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy. 2004. Guidelines for the prevention of food anaphylactic reactions in schools, preschools and child care centres.
6. NSW Department of Education and Training and NSW Department of Health. Anaphylaxis Guidelines for schools.

Name of policy - Allergy		
Version	Action	Date
V1	Ratified by College Board	2007
No change	Reviewed by Executive	2010
No change	Reviewed by Executive	2013
Minor changes	Reviewed by Principal	2015
No change	Reviewed by Executive	2016
No change	Reviewed by Executive	2017
Minor changes	Reviewed by Principal	2018
	Review due	2019