

# FOOD ALLERGY GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

Training Module



# GOAL

- Create an environment where children with food allergies will be safe
- Employ prevention and avoidance strategies-education is key
- Be prepared to react immediately to a life-threatening condition
- Every member of the school staff is responsible for safety

# BACKGROUND

- Growing food safety concern
- 11 million Americans have food allergies, 3 million under the age of 18
- No cure
- Only means of prevention is strict avoidance
- 150-200 people die each year-most outside the home
- Every School should have a protocol in place to protect food allergic children and each food allergic child should have an individual allergy plan

# 8 MOST COMMON FOOD ALLERGIES

- Shellfish
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Fish
- Milk
- Wheat
- Tree nuts  
(cashews, almonds, walnuts)
- Soy

# SYMPTOMS OF ANAPHYLAXIS

- MOUTH: itching, tingling, swelling of lips, tongue, mouth
- SKIN: hives, itchy rash, swelling of face or arms/legs
- GUT: nausea, cramps, vomiting, diarrhea
- THROAT: tightening, hoarseness, hacking cough
- LUNG: short of breath, coughing, wheezing
- HEART: thready pulse, fainting, pale or blue skin

# TREATMENT

- EARLY USE OF EpiPen® IS KEY TO A PERSON'S SURVIVAL OF ANAPHYLACTIC REACTIONS
- Use of epinephrine (or antihistamines such as Benadryl ® or Zyrtec ® for milder reactions) should be in accordance with Action Plan developed in conjunction with student's physician. (See handout: Sample Allergy Action Plan)
- If epinephrine administered, 911 should be called immediately.

# ADMINISTRATION

- Assure that written guidelines are in place
- Facilitate communication among staff, parents and medical professionals related to food allergies
- Consider classroom clustering of food allergic children

# NURSES RESPONSIBILITIES

- Work with parents, doctors, students, teachers, coaches, etc. to develop food allergy action plan
- In-service education for staff (repeated annually and for new hires)
- Administer medication/train staff to administer medication



# NURSES RESPONSIBILITIES

- Medications must be accessible at all times by a trained person – for severely allergic children, medications should follow them throughout the day
- Label all medications – periodically check expiration date
- Coordinate and participate in drills (determine where child will wait for ambulance and with whom) review plan after a reaction

# NURSES RESPONSIBILITIES

- Listen to children re: food allergy issues
- Register with local hospital and determine if epinephrine on ambulance or if you need to say something specific when calling.  
\*Note: Not all ambulances carry epinephrine.
- If a reaction occurs, implement emergency plan immediately, administer epinephrine if necessary, call ambulance

## TEACHERS (INCLUDING CLASSROOM, SPECIALS AND AFTER-SCHOOL) AND COACHES

- Be able to avoid, recognize and respond quickly to an allergic reaction
- Make sure Art/Science/Classroom projects are free of allergens
- If classroom pets are present, evaluate food for safety from allergens
- Enforce no food sharing policy
- Watch for social issues (i.e., bullying, teasing)

## TEACHERS (INCLUDING CLASSROOM, SPECIALS AND AFTER-SCHOOL) AND COACHES

- Make sure substitute teachers are aware of the food allergic child and how to avoid, recognize and respond quickly to an allergic reaction and have documentation readily available for substitute teacher
- Work with parents, rely on their expertise, invite them to all celebrations involving food. Have them keep safe treats on hand
- Have cell phones, walkie-talkies, etc. for communication

# CAFETERIA, RECESS, PLAYGROUND

- Wash all surfaces prior to meals
- Staff to be able to recognize symptoms of food allergy and be prepared to react quickly
- Proper food service preparation
- Training in administration of emergency medications – have emergency medications readily accessible
- Photo bio of each allergic child (with parental consent)
- Avoid cross-contamination from shared utensils, unclean work surfaces, reused cooking oil

# CAFETERIA, RECESS, PLAYGROUND

- List of ingredients available
- NO sharing taught and enforced
- Nonperishable lunch on hand for food allergic children
- Offer allergen “free” table
- Children to wash hands before and after eating (wipes OK, hand gel **not** OK)
- Communication tools (walkie-talkies, cell phones)

# THE SCHOOL BUS

- “No eating”
- Seat in front for allergic child
- Walk through before and after
- Communication tools (walkie-talkies, cell phones)

# CLASS TRIPS

- Notify parents in advance-invite parents
- Plan ahead to be sure the trip does not expose children to allergens (i.e. visit to a farm where animals eat peanuts, nuts, wheat, etc.)
- Teacher carries emergency plan
- Check bus for allergens



# CLASS TRIPS

- Designated trained person carries emergency medications
- Cell phone in case of emergency
- Maintain “off-site” emergency protocol
- Wash hands before and after eating (wipes OK, hand gel **not** OK)

# PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

- Information to all relevant staff re: food allergic children
- Take all health complaints from food allergic children seriously (See handout: “How a Child Might Describe an Allergic Reaction”)
- Emergency instructions always available
- Keep supply of “safe” foods on hand

# PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES

- Who will read food labels? Who is the backup reader? Teach label reading techniques-many foods contain hidden allergens
- Who is in charge if a reaction occurs?
- Where is medication kept?

Remember, there is no  
cure for food allergies;  
prevention is key



# CHILDREN'S BOOKS

- The Peanut Butter Jam- Elizabeth Sussman Nassau
- No Nuts For Me- Aaron Zevy
- Allie The Allergic Elephant- Nicole Smith
- Series of books about “Alexander the Elephant Who Couldn’t Eat Peanuts” – Anne Munoz-Furlong

# ADULT BOOKS

- The Parent's Guide to Food Allergies-  
Marianne Barber
- Caring for Your Child with Severe Food  
Allergies- Lisa Cipriano Collins

# RESOURCES

- Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network  
[www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org) (for information and links to support legislation)
- Getting Started with Your New EpiPen-free instructional DVD from Dey: [www.dey.com](http://www.dey.com) , 1-800-786-5775  
Free “HOW TO” DVD
- For food allergy lesson plans teachers can visit [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)
- For lesson plans specifically dealing with peanut allergies teachers can visit <http://pbskids.org/arthur/parentsteachers/lesson/health> and look for “peanut allergies” in the table of contents

# Pending Legislation Regarding Establishing Food Allergy Guidelines In Schools

- New York State Senate Bill (S6436), “Enacts Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Management Act” :  
<http://public.leginfo.state.ny.us/menugetf.cgi>
- U.S. Assembly Bill (H.R. 4063): “Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Act of 2005”:  
<http://www.foodallergy.org/Advocacy/FAAMA.html>



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