

## FOOD ALLERGY MANAGEMENT

### **Introduction**

When they are exposed to certain foods, some students experience severe and potentially life threatening allergic responses. The first goal of RSU 19 is to try to the best of our ability to avoid the allergic child's exposure to their trigger food. The second goal is to have an emergency plan in place if an accidental exposure occurs. This plan will provide for immediate identification of a reaction, treatment, and medical support to prevent progressive symptoms, stabilization, and appropriate transportation to a hospital.

The amount of food needed to cause an allergic reaction varies from one person to another. For some individuals, symptoms may develop when the food comes into contact with their skin, or after smelling the vapors of the food to which they are allergic. Ingestion of the allergenic food is not necessary for some highly sensitive individuals, to trigger and allergic reaction / response.

Symptoms can show up in the skin, respiratory tract, gastrointestinal tract and cardiovascular system. They can include itchy skin or eyes, hives, eczema, runny of stuffy nose, itching or swelling of the throat, wheezing, difficulty breathing, coughing, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, drop in blood pressure, or increased heart rate. Individual reactions can include one or multiple symptoms.

The parent's of any food-allergic student are the experts about the child's allergy. The school will work in partnership with the child's parents, physician and the student who has food allergies to develop a plan to ensure the safety of each student. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the School Nurse of a food allergy with adequate time to put this policy into action. This policy will only be implemented when alerted to a food allergy in a student. Please note that this policy only addresses FOOD allergies. And also please be aware that not all food allergies are life-threatening. It will be imperative that each child with a food allergy has their own Individual Health Action Plan to assure their needs are addressed appropriately.

### **Prevention**

#### **Parent Responsibility**

- A parent must notify the school as soon as an allergy is diagnosed. A meeting must be set up including the School Principal, Food Service Director, School Nurse, Parent, and Classroom Teacher as soon as possible.
- Parents will provide a written emergency plan of action for use in the school, should their child have an allergic reaction. Parents will provide medical documentation of the severity of their child's allergy and signed permission for the school nurse to contact the child's physician regarding medical management in the school setting and appropriate

- Parents will provide the school with any medication which their child requires for emergency treatment (ie. Benadryl, Epi Pen, asthma inhaler) in a clearly marked container and ensure that appropriate refills are provided before or on an expiration date.
- Parents of food allergy students, who decide to have their child eat prepared food, will initiate a meeting with the school nurse and food service director to determine safe menu options.
- Parents will educate their children in self-management of their food allergy including: safe and unsafe foods, strategies for avoiding exposure to unsafe foods, symptoms of an allergic reaction, how and when to tell an adult if he or she may be having an allergy related problem, and how to read food labels to avoid ingredients in commercial food (age appropriate).

### **Student Responsibility**

- Parents and school personnel will assist the student to be able to manage his or her food allergy, as appropriate for the student's age and developmental level.
  - The student will take as much responsibility as possible for avoiding allergens and managing their condition.
  - The student will not trade or share food with others.
  - The student will wash hands before **and** after eating.
  - The student will learn to recognize symptoms of an allergic reaction.
  - The student will understand the importance of seeking adult help if they eat something they believe may contain the food to which they are allergic, or believe they are experiencing an allergic reaction.
  - The student will develop a relationship with the school nurse and/or another trusted adult in the school system to assist in identifying issues related to the management of the allergy in school.

### **School Responsibility**

- The school will assure that all staff who interact with the student on a regular basis understand food allergies, can recognize symptoms, and know what to do in an emergency. The information will be reviewed semi-annually by the School Nursing Team.
- The school staff will work to eliminate the use of food allergens in the allergic student's meals, educational tools, arts and crafts projects or incentives.

### **School Wide**

- A poster will be in each classroom and all common areas (ie., offices, teachers' rooms, etc.) which will outline the signs of an allergic reaction and action to be taken.
- Appropriate RSU 19 school staff will be fully educated regarding food allergies, symptoms and emergency protocol and will be responsible to carry out individual emergency action plans. The will be reviewed semi-annually.
- The school will train appropriate staff on Epi Pen use annually. A competency skill check list will be kept in their file and will need to be recertified annually.

- Bus drivers will:
  - Be alerted to recognize students with high risk medical conditions.
  - Enforce the “no eating” rules for all riders.
  - Be trained to recognize signs of a severe allergic reaction.
  - Be Epi Pen trained and responsible for carrying out each student’s Individual Emergency Action Plan.
- Substitute teachers, bus drivers, kitchen personnel, and secretaries will receive food allergy awareness and Epi Pen training prior to working in classrooms/and or the school with food allergic children. Food allergic children will be identified to substitute staff members.
- Volunteers will be made aware of updated allergy information and protocols on an annual basis.
- Students in all classes will be encouraged to wash their hands after snack and lunch to avoid contamination of commonly used objects (computer keyboards, athletic equipment, etc.)
- Reminder notices concerning food allergies will be sent home to all parents prior to major holidays that might include food.

**Health Office**

- Epi Pens and other emergency medication will be stored in labeled boxes and arranged in an organized fashion in the Main Office.
- Each box will be clearly labeled with the child’s name and will contain medication as well as the student’s Individual Emergency Action Plan.

**In the Classroom**

- With the student’s and the parent’s permission, the teacher and school nurses will conduct a lesson about food allergies. Emphasis will be on what the student can eat as well as what must be avoided.
- The classroom teacher will send a letter home semi-annually (August and January) to parents of all students in the class to enlist their help in keeping certain foods out of the classroom, particularly at snack time, as appropriate.
- A sign will be placed at the door (ie., Peanut-Free Zone) as appropriate. Signage will be provided by Nursing Staff.
- The teacher will review lesson plans that involve food with the nurse and building administrator. Approved projects which have a food component will be discussed with parents of food-allergic children who have requested notification. Alternative projects for the entire class which use non-allergenic food or non-food items will be substituted whenever possible.
- Allied arts teachers will be informed of all food-allergic students, so lessons can be adjusted accordingly.
- Teachers will ensure that information about each food-allergic student will be available in the substitute folder.
- Non-food items should always be used instead of food to recognize good work or good behavior.
- Students will not be allowed to trade food.

- Class parties and special events. Class parties should follow the guidelines set forth in our wellness policy. If a classroom or school has a food allergy, then special accommodations will be made to keep all children safe. Food that does not meet the criteria will be returned at the end of the school day.
- All students will be encouraged to wash their hands frequently throughout the day and after eating. In classrooms with allergy students, children will be asked to wash their hands before **and** after handling food.

### **On Field Trips**

- The teacher and parent of an allergy student will review plans for field trips. Consideration will be given to handling eating situations of field trips to keep all children safe.
- The allergic student's parents will be invited to volunteer to participate in the field trip, if appropriate.
- When groups are assigned, allergy students will be assigned to the teacher's group or to their parent's group if the parent attends the field trip. This adult will be responsible for carrying the Medical/Epi Pen Bag and will remain with the child at all times.

### **In the Cafeteria**

- Food Service staff and those on regular duty in the cafeteria will be trained to be alert for the signs of a severe allergic reaction and how to use an Epi Pen.
- Food Service staff will minimize preparation and serving of foods which contain nut or peanut products or other trigger foods that a child may be allergic to, when appropriate. All food service staff will have sanitation training provided by the Food Service Director. It will be important that all tables are cleaned before **and** after use.
- The individual emergency action plan will be placed in the kitchen, taped to the wall near the telephone, where it will be readily accessible in an emergency situation. All medication is kept in the main office.

## **Emergency Action For Severe Allergic Reaction**

### **Individual Emergency Action Plan Availability**

- The School will have the Individual Emergency Action Plan available in each health office for those students with known serious allergies. Parents will list action to be taken (medications, hospital of choice, and emergency contact numbers). This information will also be available to classroom teachers, kitchen staff, as well as the office staff.
- The nurse will periodically review and update the action plan for each student annually. The Epi Pens will be checked quarterly for discoloration and expiration date.

**Accidental Exposure Care**

- In the event of an accidental exposure, if the student is in or near a school building, the student should be immediately escorted to the health office, accompanied by a staff member and a parent will be notified immediately.
- The health office staff will:
  - Observe for breathing difficulty, hives or pallor. Monitor pulse, respiration and blood pressure.
  - Follow the Individual Emergency Action Plan.
  - Continue to monitor the student closely (BP, pulse, respiration).
  - Elevate legs if BP is low (normal BP range is 80-125 over 46-84).
- If the student is not in the school building, the attending staff person will follow the student's Individual Emergency Action Plan including the use of Benadryl and/or Epi Pen.
- Parent will be notified and rescue will be called if necessary.
- After an Epi Pen is administered, the student will be transported in an ambulance or qualified EMS vehicle to the hospital to be thoroughly checked by a physician. Additional epinephrine (Epi Pen or Epi Pen Jr.) will be sent with the student to the Hospital. If possible, a school staff member will go to the Hospital to be with the student until parent arrives.

**Post Exposure**

- Any exposure should be documented by the School Nurse, whether Epi Pen was needed or not.
- After an emergency requiring the use of an Epi Pen, the nurse, teacher, parent and student will meet to review the incident and the student's protocol.
- In the event of an emergency requiring the use of an Epi Pen, and incident report will be completed. This report will be filed with the building principal, superintendent, and a copy retained in the student's health record.