

FOOD ALLERGY AWARENESS

Dear PTO Parent Volunteer,

In an effort to comply with the District 181 Food allergy Management Program, I am sharing some basic information on food allergy and anaphylaxis. Since many of you will be volunteering at events where food is present, an awareness of food allergy and its symptoms would be beneficial. Please know that all staff, including lunch supervisors, have been trained in Epipen use and how to respond to food allergy and would be expected to respond to a student. As the nurse, I am always in the building during student lunch periods as well. The chart below is meant to be informative, in case you ever see a student who might be having a reaction and need to bring it to our attention.

Additionally, since food allergies are present in society in general, I have posted a link that demonstrates how to give an Epipen if you ever need to offer assistance to someone.

June Zogas, RN
Walker School Nurse

Food Allergies in Schools

In implementing this Food Allergy Management Plan, District 181 recognizes the necessity to create clear and consistent District-wide guidelines to help our administrators, teachers, students and parents protect those with food allergies. Food allergies can be life-threatening. They occur when the body's immune system reacts to the protein component in certain foods as if it were harmful. A reaction can occur within minutes or hours after exposure to an allergen. Some individuals may react to just touching or inhaling the allergen; for others, consumption of just a miniscule amount of allergenic food -- be it peanuts, milk, wheat, or some other food -- can cause death. The severity of a reaction is not predictable; every allergic reaction can become a life-threatening reaction. In many cases, based on the determination of an educational team, students with life-threatening food allergies are protected by federal laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability. [The American Academy of Pediatrics issued a position statement for the treatment of anaphylaxis in schools.](#)

WHAT IS ANAPHYLAXIS?

Anaphylaxis, sometimes called allergic shock, is a potentially life-threatening medical condition occurring in allergic individuals after exposure to an allergen. It occurs when the body's immune system reacts to harmless substances as though they were harmful invaders. During an anaphylactic reaction, the body releases chemical mediators, such as histamine, that trigger an inflammatory reaction in the tissues of the skin, respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract and cardiovascular system. When the inflammatory symptoms are widespread and systemic, the reaction is termed anaphylaxis. Symptoms include:

Organ	Symptoms
Lungs	Short of breath; wheezing; repetitive cough
Heart	Pale, blue or flushed skin; faint; weak pulse; irregular heartbeat; dizzy
Throat	Tightness or closing of throat; hoarseness, other voice change; trouble swallowing; feeling that something is stuck in throat; not talking
Mouth	Swelling of the tongue and/or lips
Nose	Itchy/runny nose; sneezing
Skin	Hives or rash; widespread redness; swelling of any body part
Gut	Stomach/abdominal cramps; vomiting; severe diarrhea
Brain	Feeling anxiety, confusion, that something bad is about to happen