



## **Food Allergy Information and Documentation Guidelines**

### **Overview**

Food allergies are presenting increasing challenges for schools. Because of the life-threatening nature of these allergies and the increasing prevalence, school districts and individual schools need to be ready for the entry of students with food allergies.

### **Food Allergy Prevalence**

Food allergies affect 8% of children under age three, 6-8% of school-age children, and 2.5% of adults. Food allergy prevalence has increased 55% in the last five years. 40-50% of those persons with a diagnosed food allergy are judged to have a high risk of anaphylaxis (a life-threatening allergic reaction). Every food allergy reaction has the possibility of developing into a life-threatening and potentially fatal anaphylactic reaction. This can occur within minutes of exposure to the allergen.

### **Characteristics of Food Allergy Reaction in Students**

Allergic reactions to foods vary among students and can range from mild to severe life-threatening anaphylactic reactions. Some students, who are very sensitive, may react to just touching or inhaling the allergen. For other students, consumption of as little as one five-thousandth of a teaspoon of an allergenic food can cause death. Eight foods (peanut, tree nut, milk, egg, soy, wheat, fish, and shellfish) account for 90% of total food allergies, although any food has the potential to cause an allergic reaction. Peanut and tree nuts account for 92% of severe and fatal reactions, and along with fish and shellfish, are often considered to be lifelong allergies.

### **Impact on the School**

When a physician assesses that a student's food allergy may result in anaphylaxis the student's condition meets the definition of a "disability" and is covered under the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and may be covered under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) if the allergy management affects the student's ability to make educational progress.

### **What Is a Food Allergy?**

People with allergies have over-reactive immune systems that target otherwise harmless elements of our diet and environment. During an allergic reaction to food, the immune system recognizes a specific food protein as a target. This initiates a sequence of events in the cells of the immune system resulting in the release of chemical mediators such as histamine. These chemical mediators trigger inflammatory reactions in the tissues of the skin (itching, hives, rash), the respiratory system (cough, difficulty breathing, wheezing), the gastrointestinal tract (vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain), and the cardiovascular system (decreased blood pressure, heartbeat irregularities, shock). When the symptoms are widespread and systemic, the reaction is termed "anaphylaxis", a potentially life-threatening event.

## **What Is Anaphylaxis?**

Anaphylaxis can occur immediately or up to two hours following allergen exposure. In about a third of anaphylactic reactions, the initial symptoms are followed by a delayed wave of symptoms two to four hours later. This combination of an early phase of symptoms followed by a late phase of symptoms is defined as a biphasic reaction. While the initial symptoms respond to epinephrine, the delayed biphasic response may not respond at all to epinephrine and may not be prevented by steroids. Therefore, it is imperative that following the administration of epinephrine, the student be transported by emergency medical services to the nearest hospital emergency department even if the symptoms appear to have been resolved. Students experiencing anaphylaxis should be observed in a hospital emergency department for a minimum of 4-6 hours after initial symptoms subside, to observe for a possible biphasic reaction. In the event a biphasic reaction occurs, intensive medical care could then be provided.

## **Documentation Requirement**

The student's health care provider shall provide the following:

- Licensed provider documentation of food allergy.
- The type of allergies (e.g., to milk, peanuts, tree nuts, etc.)
- Description of the student's past allergic reactions, including triggers and warning signs.

The student shall provide the following information, or an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) which includes:

- A description of the student's emotional response to the condition and need for support.
- Name/telephone number of the student's primary care provider and allergist.
- Method to reach emergency contact designee should an emergency occur, e.g., telephone, cell phone, beeper.
- Assessment for self-administration (It is important that students take more responsibility for their food allergies as they grow older and are developmentally ready to accept responsibility).

## **Classrooms**

Faculty/instructors must be familiar with the college's medical emergency procedure to students in their classes.

## **Responsibilities of the Student with Food Allergies/Anaphylaxis**

- Take as much responsibility, as possible, for avoiding allergens.
- Learn to recognize symptoms of an allergic reaction.
- Promptly inform staff as soon as accidental exposure occurs or symptoms appear.
- Communicate the seriousness of the allergy.
- Read labels.
- Carry own epinephrine auto-injector.
- Administer own epinephrine auto-injector and be able to train others in its use.



## Emergency Form

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Allergy to: \_\_\_\_\_

Asthmatic    Yes\* \_\_\_\_\_    No \_\_\_\_\_    \*High risk for severe reaction

Signs of an Allergic Reaction (circle all that apply)

**Systems:**

**Symptoms:**

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| Mouth   | itching and swelling of lips, tongue, or mouth                                  |
| Throat* | itching and/or a sense of tightness in throat, hoarseness, and/or hacking cough |
| Skin    | hives, itchy rash, and/or swelling about face or extremities                    |
| Stomach | nausea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, and/or diarrhea                             |
| Lungs*  | shortness of breath, repetitive coughing, and/or wheezing                       |
| Heart*  | "thready" pulse, "passing out"  |

The severity of symptoms can quickly change.

\*All above symptoms can potentially progress to a life-threatening situation.

1. If ingestion is suspected and/or symptoms are:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Student needs to use medication IMMEDIATELY!

2. Follow the College's procedure for medical emergencies.

Student's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent /Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(If student is under 18 years of age)

**Emergency Contact Information:**

Contact Name	Relationship to Student	Primary Phone Number	Secondary Phone Number