

Acton Public Schools

Life-Threatening Allergy Procedures

The Acton Public Schools recognize the increasing prevalence and life-threatening nature of allergies for many students. The goals of this procedure are to reduce the risk of exposure to allergens that pose a threat to students, to educate members of the school community on management of students' life-threatening allergies, and to plan for the needs of these students. This procedure aims to provide age-appropriate procedures and to assist children in assuming more individual responsibility for their health and safety as they grow older. The schools will work with students with life-threatening allergies and their parents/guardians to address the students' emotional and social needs in addition to their health needs.

Allergic reactions vary, and can range from mild local reactions to severe, potentially life-threatening anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis refers to a collection of symptoms affecting multiple systems in the body; the most dangerous and potentially fatal symptoms are breathing difficulties and a drop in blood pressure or shock. Anaphylaxis may occur in allergic individuals after exposure to a specific allergen even when prior exposure has not resulted in symptoms. Reactions can occur immediately or several hours following allergen exposure. Anaphylaxis in a food allergic student may occur with ingestion of the allergen. It is also possible that the student may touch an allergen, not wash hands afterwards, and then touch his or her mouth or eyes. Some students, who are very sensitive, may react to inhaling the allergen.

The most common causes of anaphylaxis in children include allergies to:

- **Foods (most commonly: peanuts, tree nuts, milk, dairy products, eggs, soy, wheat, fish and shellfish)**
- **Insect stings (yellow jackets, bees, wasps, hornets)**
- **Medications**
- **Latex (refer to Latex Allergy Procedure)**

For the student with life-threatening allergies, the school nurse, in collaboration with parents/guardians, school physician, and principal, as needed, will develop an individualized Emergency Health Care Plan addressing the student's needs and reasonable accommodations. To promote an inclusionary experience for all students and to reduce exposure to allergens, controlled food choices, no food, or food restrictions will be considered.

Responsibilities

The implementation of the District procedure and of the individualized plan for each allergic student requires a team approach and cooperation among administrators, teachers and other staff members, school nurses, school physicians, parents/guardians, and the student.

Responsibility of Parents/Guardians

The parents/guardians of students with life-threatening food allergies will:

1. provide physician's documentation of specific allergies to the school nurse each September (or school entry if mid-year start) or when diagnosed.
2. provide an EpiPen and physician orders for its administration to the school nurse each September (or school entry if mid-year start) or when diagnosed.
3. be encouraged to provide the classroom teacher with safe snacks that can be eaten during classroom celebrations.
4. be encouraged to inform the bus or van driver, and any substitute driver when possible, about their child's life-threatening allergy.
5. be encouraged to provide the student's Emergency Health Care Plan to persons responsible for the child during after-school activities located at the school or sponsored by the school.

Responsibility of Student

The student with life-threatening allergies will:

1. take as much responsibility as possible for avoiding allergens.
2. not trade or share foods.
3. wash hands before and after eating.
4. learn to recognize symptoms of an allergic reaction.
5. promptly inform an adult upon exposure.

Responsibility of the School Nurse

The School Nurse will:

1. discuss the child's life-threatening allergy with the parent/guardian, collaborate with the school's physician as warranted, and develop an Emergency Health Care Plan at the beginning of the school year, or as needed when a student's allergy is identified. The plan will be reviewed annually.
2. maintain all student Emergency Health Care Plans in an available location in the nurse's office.
3. provide names of students with life-threatening allergies to staff, including principals, teachers, specialists, cafeteria managers, and lunch monitors as appropriate at the start of the school year.

4. consult with the classroom teachers to develop a classroom-specific protocol to accommodate students as needed.
5. provide copies of the student Emergency Health Care Plans for the substitute teacher folder in classrooms.
6. provide annual training to staff who work directly with students with life-threatening food allergies when the school nurse is not present, e.g. during field trips. This training will be on the management of student life-threatening allergies, and the administration of Emergency Epinephrine via auto-injector (EpiPen), as outlined in the Massachusetts Department of Public Health regulations. Training will be reviewed periodically during the school year as needed, such as prior to a field trip.
7. offer an overview annually to all staff that will focus on prevention efforts, information about common allergens, recognition of signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and emergency procedures to follow in case of a severe allergic reaction.
8. maintain a current list of all staff members trained to use an EpiPen.
9. keep a record of all EpiPens, with their expiration dates, along with the physician orders and care plans, and notify staff about location of EpiPens.
10. provide information each year to the Cafeteria Managers about specific students' life-threatening allergies and associated safety needs.
11. instruct staff that any student receiving an EpiPen should be transported to the hospital via emergency services.
12. instruct staff to follow the Emergency Health Care Plan and/or call 911 when school nurse is not present.

Responsibility of Administration

The School Administrator will:

1. arrange time necessary for the school nurse to conduct the training of staff.
2. provide walkie-talkies, or other means of communication, to staff supervising students with life-threatening allergies outside the classroom setting if no other means of communication is readily available or the location is not in the proximity to the administrative/nurses offices.
3. facilitate and support the accommodations developed for individual students, including the classroom-specific protocols.
4. train staff that 911 will be called for any student receiving emergency epinephrine.

Responsibility of the Food Service Director

The Food Service Director will:

1. Be aware and knowledgeable of procedures in operating the kitchen, food preparation and serving.
2. Establish communications and training for all school food service staff and related personnel regarding safe food preparation and student life-threatening allergies.
3. Maintain information concerning food ingredients or food labels.

4. Maintain contact information with vendors and purveyors to access food content information and require clear and complete labeling of all food products.
5. Annually review the laws protecting students with food allergies as they relate to food services.

Responsibility of Community Education

The Community Education Director will:

1. indicate in writing to groups and individuals using the APS buildings that students and staff using the building during the school day have life-threatening allergies to foods, such as peanut, tree nut, shellfish, and latex and that their help is needed to reduce the risk of life-threatening allergic reactions.
2. include in the Community Use of the Building forms a statement that, if food is used, it is the responsibility of the individual reserving the space to wipe all tables and chairs with an appropriate cleaning material prior to leaving the building.

Building-Based Procedures

Classroom Procedures (preschool to grade 6):

Prior to or within three weeks of the start of school:

1. The parent/guardian provides the school nurse with physician documentation of an allergy to begin the process of planning for the needs of the student with life-threatening allergies.
2. The nurse will provide the classroom teacher information regarding students with life-threatening allergies and the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction. At the start of school, the nurse will also provide this document of life-threatening allergies procedures to teachers to review and keep in their substitute teacher folders.
3. A copy of the student's Emergency Health Care Plan, with photo if provided, will be given to the student's classroom teacher. Copies of all Emergency Health Care Plans for the class will be placed in the substitute teacher folder.
4. The classroom teacher, in collaboration with the nurse and with input from the parents/guardians of the allergic child, will develop a classroom-specific procedure regarding the management of food in the classroom. The classroom procedure also will address cleaning of tables and chairs. Development of the classroom procedure will take into account the ages of the students and the emotional and social needs of the allergic student.
5. The nurse will inform other staff members about students with life-threatening allergies as needed.

6. A letter from the school nurse and classroom teacher will be sent to all parents in the class informing them that a student with a food allergy is a member of the class.
7. An age-appropriate review of food allergies will be conducted with classroom students at the beginning of the school year. This review will be done by the classroom teacher or in conjunction with the school nurse if requested by the teacher.

During the school year:

8. The school nurse will be consulted prior to any grade-wide or school-wide activity during school hours involving the consumption of food. Teachers will notify the school nurse about any curriculum-related activity involving food.
9. All students will be instructed that sharing or trading of food in the classroom will not be allowed.
10. The teacher will notify the parent/guardian of students with food allergies prior to any activity involving the consumption/manipulation of food.
11. The classroom teacher and/or school nurse will provide information on appropriate hygiene, including the benefits of frequent hand washing, to students at the beginning of the year. This information will be reinforced periodically throughout the school year.
12. The classroom teacher of a student with a life-threatening allergy will be provided a means to communicate with the school nurse or administration office in the event of an emergency.
13. The classroom teacher will provide clear instructions to a substitute teacher about the classroom-specific food allergy procedure.

Field Trip Procedures:

1. The nurse must be notified of all field trips prior to the scheduled date.
2. If the parent/guardian of a student with a life-threatening food allergy is not on the field trip, this student will be placed in a group chaperoned by a staff member trained in management of students with life-threatening allergies.
3. The student's EpiPen and Emergency Health Care Plan will be sent on the field trip. The nurse will review with the teacher the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and administration of an EpiPen prior to the trip. Planning for the field trip will include designation of persons carrying an EpiPen.
4. The teacher will carry a cell phone or other means of communication, and will be instructed to follow the Emergency Health Care Plan and to call 911/*77 in the event of a suspected allergic reaction.

5. Plans for lunch and snack will be discussed prior to the field trip to reduce risk of exposure to life-threatening allergens.

Cafeteria Procedures:

1. The school kitchen will prepare products in a manner that will reduce the risk of cross contamination of foods. This preparation area and all utensils will be washed, rinsed and sanitized after the completion of the task.
2. All school kitchen staff will use only latex-free gloves.
3. Individual schools will determine the procedure for lunchtime seating in a manner that includes students with life-threatening allergies.
4. The staff on duty will ensure that tables where students with life-threatening allergies sit will be washed before lunches begin and after each group finishes. Food-allergic students will not be responsible for table washing.
5. Students will be instructed that sharing or trading of food or utensils is not allowed in the cafeteria.

Transportation Procedures:

1. Parents/guardians are required to inform the bus or van driver, and any substitute driver when possible, about their child's life-threatening allergy. The student with life-threatening allergies should be encouraged to sit in the front of the bus.
2. Each school bus or van will have a working means of two-way communication and a plan to check the communication system periodically.
3. Eating will not be allowed on routine school bus or van routes. Exceptions will be provided for students with diabetes who may need a snack to treat a hypoglycemic episode or other specific circumstances.
4. School bus drivers shall be provided an overview annually in prevention efforts, information about common allergens, recognition of signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and emergency procedures to follow in case of a severe allergic reaction.

Emergency Response Procedures:

1. Annual training to staff who work directly with students with life-threatening food allergies when the school nurse is not present, e.g. during field trips, will be provided (see School Nurse Responsibilities, #6, pg. 3).

2. An overview will be provided annually to all staff that will focus on prevention efforts and emergency procedures (see School Nurse Responsibilities, #7, pg. 3).
3. When allergic symptoms are suspected in a student with known life-threatening allergies, the teacher or staff member supervising the student shall follow the Emergency Health Care Plan. The school nurse shall be contacted as soon as possible. Parents/guardians will be informed whenever allergic symptoms are suspected in a student with diagnosed life-threatening allergies.
4. Staff members supervising students with life-threatening allergies must have a means of communication to call for assistance.
5. 911 will be called for any student receiving emergency epinephrine.
6. The student's parent/guardian(s) will be notified as soon as possible in the event of anaphylactic reaction and as appropriate in the event of other allergy symptoms.
7. The school nurse or another school staff member trained to administer epinephrine in accordance with 105 CMR 210 must be available in each school facility during the school day. Staff will be informed of procedures to follow in the absence of the school nurse.
8. The school nurse will maintain an authorization signed by the school physician to administer an EpiPen to individuals with unknown allergies. In the event that an individual with unknown allergies exhibits symptoms of anaphylaxis, staff will contact the nurse and/or call 911 if nurse is unavailable.