

GUIDELINES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF STUDENTS WITH SEVERE FOOD ALLERGIES

DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND

Students with severe, sometimes life threatening, food allergies attend Howard County Public Schools. Foods that most commonly cause anaphylaxis, a **life threatening** allergic reaction, are peanuts, tree nuts, shellfish, milk, wheat, soy, and eggs. These severe allergic reactions can occur within minutes of ingestion or a reaction can be delayed for up to two hours. Some reactions are “biphasic” in nature, with an initial period of symptoms, a symptom free period of 2-3 hours followed by severe shock-like symptoms. At present there is no cure for food allergies and strict avoidance is the key to preventing reactions. Once an accidental exposure occurs, prompt administration of emergency epinephrine is critical in the management of the reaction. Accidental exposure may occur by eating the food, inhaling food vapors, or having direct contact with the skin, mouth or eyes.

Food products containing allergens are prevalent in the school setting, in the classroom as well as in the cafeteria. Howard County Public School System’s goal is to provide a safe school environment for students. It is important that staff and parents work in collaboration to address the safety needs of students with severe food allergies. Under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, students with food allergies who are found eligible are protected from disability related discrimination. Some individuals are highly sensitive to contact with even trace amounts of the offending food. Peanuts, in particular, are a common allergen and are often a hidden ingredient in foods.

POSSIBLE OBSERVATIONS / SYMPTOMS

- Swelling of the lips, face, throat, tongue, difficulty swallowing, change in voice quality
- Coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, gasping for air
- Dizzy/lightheaded, fainting, unresponsive
- Hives all over the body, numbness/tingling, swelling of face/extremities.
- Nausea, abdominal pain or cramps, vomiting, diarrhea
- Uneasiness, agitation, panic, feeling of impending doom

GOALS

- To assure staff awareness of students with severe food allergies in the school
- To assure staff awareness of the seriousness of food allergy
- To assure parents and guardians are aware of measures taken by HCPSS to reduce allergen exposure
- To minimize the potential for exposure of food allergic students to the food allergen
- To assure staff awareness of the signs and symptoms of a severe allergic reaction
- To provide prompt and effective intervention in the event of an allergic reaction
- To minimize adverse educational effects on the affected students and their classmates

GUIDELINES

HOWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) will support the efforts of individual schools and parents to provide a safe environment for students with severe food allergies.
- Eating in the classroom should be avoided. However, the HCPSS recognizes the rights of students with diabetes and other health conditions who may need to eat during class and should not be required to leave the classroom. Parents of students who need to snack in the classroom should be encouraged by school staff to provide foods that do not pose a potential risk for food allergic students in the same classroom. HCPSS also recognizes scheduling concerns including numerous lunch shifts and the need to provide snack in the classroom for students on late lunch shifts, returning from field trips, or other school sponsored trips.
- Schools will allow the storage of emergency epinephrine in a safe location in the classroom and other student areas as appropriate, to facilitate prompt access if needed. At least one dose of emergency epinephrine must be stored in the health room.
- HCPSS will provide training for teachers, assistants, or others in the school building in the recognition of a severe allergic reaction, the use of emergency epinephrine, and proper follow-up emergency procedures when a student with a recognized life-threatening allergy is enrolled in the school.
- HCPSS will inform parents or guardians of school system measures to reduce the risk of allergens exposure at the beginning of each school year by posting this guideline on the HCPSS school system website: <https://www.hcpss.org/health/allergies/>
- School staff should avoid the use of foods in curricular activities if possible. For example, the use of food is integral to the Family and Consumer Science and Academic Life Skills (ALS) curriculum.
- Schools need to consider student allergies when planning incentive and promotional activities.
- Schools should develop alternatives to the use of food for celebrations or as rewards.

- HCPSS staff will follow the HCPSS Health Services Field Trip and After School Activities Procedure to ensure all students are able to participate in school events, after-school activities, and field trips. These procedures outline the requirement that a teacher, in consultation with the Health Room staff, will assure appropriate health information, medication, and training are provided to teachers or appropriate staff for students on any day, extended day, overnight, foreign travel trip or after school sponsored activity.
- HCPSS will monitor and implement, as necessary, the strategies developed in accordance with the Maryland State School Health Services Guidelines: Management of Anaphylaxis in Schools to reduce the risk of exposure to anaphylactic causative agents in classroom and common areas
- Maryland Law, Education Article § 7-426, requires schools to designate a table in the cafeteria as peanut and tree-nut free. For a student with a physician-documented anaphylactic allergy (e.g., physician's order for emergency epinephrine) to peanuts or tree nuts, or a physician-documented anaphylactic allergy to another food, provisions for an allergen-free table will be made on a case-by-case basis, based on student need, physician-input, and parent request.
- HCPSS will provide annual professional development on Policy 9460 Bullying, Cyberbullying, Harassment and Intimidation Involving Students to ensure that HCPSS employees increase their awareness of the prevalence, causes and consequences of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, including hate/bias incidents or intimidation. Professional development will cover all topics outlined in Policy 9460 Implementation Procedures, Section II, Professional Development. HCPSS will provide guidance for food distribution by outside public or private individuals, groups, and entities holding functions on school grounds. This guidance is shared on the HCPSS Use of School Facilities website.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

- Parents of students with severe food allergy are expected to notify school administration and health room staff each year of the student's allergy. This is to be done in writing prior to the beginning of each school year.
- Parents of students with severe food allergies must provide at least one emergency epinephrine injection device along with a complete physician's order to the school each year prior to the student attending. A physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant must renew school medication orders after July 1st at the beginning of each year. If students are to carry emergency epinephrine with them, the physician's order must state this requirement.
- Parents must sign permission for school personnel to administer any form of medication, including emergency epinephrine.
- Parents will reinforce safe, healthy eating habits and health practices with the student.
- Parents will assess risk factors for any trip outside the school building and discuss these factors with their child and with staff.

- Parents are encouraged to meet with the student's teachers, and the health room staff to discuss the student's special needs. This meeting should take place at the end of the school year for the next year, but may take place before students return in the fall. Parents should take the initiative to set up these meetings.
- Parents are expected to provide their food allergic children with an appropriate Medic Alert bracelet or necklace indicating their allergy.
- Parents are expected to assure that their child knows how to self-administer emergency epinephrine when age and developmentally appropriate.
- Parents are expected to educate their child in self-management of their food allergy including:
 - The early signs of anaphylaxis
 - How and when to tell an adult that they may be having a reaction
 - Strategies for avoidance of exposure to the offending food products
 - Safe and unsafe foods for that child
 - The risks of unauthorized food sharing
 - The need for good hand washing when handling foods
 - The need to report teasing by other children to parents and school staff
- Parents must recognize that risk of accidental exposure to foods can be reduced in the school setting, but not eliminated.
- Parents will assure that current emergency information is complete with alternate telephone numbers and alternate emergency contacts listed.
- Parents will notify the school administrator and health and teaching staff of changes in their child's needs during the school year.
- Parents will review any ingredients lists provided by school staff if needed for use during classroom activities.

HEALTH SERVICES RESPONSIBILITIES

- School nurses and health assistants will review records and emergency cards each year to identify students who have food allergies. A determination of the seriousness of the allergy for that student should then be made by the school nurse to identify students who are at risk for severe life threatening reactions.
- School nurses and health assistants will document the allergy on the Individual Health Problems Record form in the electronic student record and on the Health Problems List/Special Health Needs List in the substitute folder.
- School nurses, in collaboration with the parent, classroom teacher(s), and school administrator/designee will develop an individual health care plan and emergency plan for the student that outlines the student's needs and the specific interventions appropriate to meet those needs. This plan should address classroom modifications, lunchroom modifications, possible transportation issues, and an emergency plan.
- School nurses, in the development of the individual health care plan, may discuss the need and benefits of the allergen-free table with the parent.

- While most students do not experience severe reactions with skin-only contact with their allergen, some students need more protection in the cafeteria. An allergen-free table should be considered when:
 - The student experiences severe, frequent and/or disruptive symptoms after skin exposure to their allergen.
 - There is concern that other students' food may be ingested by the student.
 - The student experiences symptoms from inhalation of food odors/dust (e.g. peanut shells), etc.
 - The parent makes a request
 - To prevent social isolation, the student with the food allergy may invite a friend to sit at this table who is eating a lunch that has been purchased from the cafeteria and is noted to be free of peanuts, tree nuts, and/or other allergens.
- School nurses, in collaboration with health assistants, the parent and the school administrator/designee, will determine which school staff members should be informed of the student's allergy and the level of information and training that should be provided. At a minimum, the classroom teacher and bus driver should receive written information from health services staff on the signs and symptoms of a severe allergic reaction and the appropriate first aid response to be taken for that student. All employees are expected to complete annual on-line training on the recognition of the symptoms of anaphylaxis.
- School nurses and health assistants will be competent to administer emergency epinephrine.
- School nurses will train all team level staff of students with life-threatening allergies, and at least two other appropriate school staff in the use of emergency epinephrine. Teachers, instructional assistants, school administrators, front office personnel, and others participate in this training. School nurses will provide training for bus drivers and bus aides for those students who have emergency epinephrine orders on file in the health room that specifically state the students must carry emergency epinephrine.
- In accordance with MD Code, Education, § 7-426.2, a school nurse or other authorized school employee may administer emergency epinephrine, if available, to a student who is determined to be or perceived to be in anaphylaxis regardless of whether the student has:
 - Been identified as having an anaphylactic allergy or
 - A prescription for epinephrine as prescribed by an authorized licensed prescriber under the Health Occupations Article §12-101
- School nurses and health assistants will carry out all related routine health services procedures as directed in the health services manual.
- School nurses and health assistants assure that current emergency information is complete with alternate telephone numbers and alternate emergency contacts listed.
- School health services staff will promote food allergy awareness when a food allergic student is enrolled in the school.
- The school nurse will complete an assessment of students with self-carry orders to determine their competency and ability to self-administer an epi-pen per the HCPSS Health Services Medication Procedure. No student will be allowed to self-carry without clearance from the school nurse.

- School nurses in collaboration with school administrators shall revoke the authority of a child to self-administer or self-carry medication if the child endangers himself or herself or another child through misuse of the medication

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Students will become informed about symptoms of food allergic reactions.
- Students will practice age appropriate behavior regarding health and safety.
- Students should wear an appropriate Medic Alert bracelet or necklace indicating their allergy at all times while in school.
- Students will inform the school administrator, teacher, counselor, school nurse, health assistant, or other responsible adult if they are being harassed or bullied about their allergies.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

- School administrators, in collaboration with the school nurse or health assistant, will identify teachers and other school staff who will be trained in the use of emergency epinephrine.
- School administrators should request parents of other students in a life threatening food allergic student's class to avoid bringing foods to school that contain certain offending foods. In addition, school administrators should encourage parents to use alternate non-food treats when a food allergic student is in the class. The assistance of the school PTA should be sought to support this practice.
- School administrators will enforce the "no-eating" policy in areas that are normally off limits to eating (e.g. computer labs, media center, etc.).
- School administrators will assure that students will receive instruction on proper hand washing. **School administrators will designate an allergen-free table in the cafeteria, as needed.**
- School administrators will identify appropriate areas within the school where special events involving food may be held.
- School administrators will direct staff to carefully clean table surfaces and any other areas that may have food residues after activities involving food to reduce the potential for accidental exposure.
- School administrators will assist students and staff to provide a safe environment for the life threatening food allergic child by promoting understanding and acceptance of the student and his or her allergic condition.
- School administrators will monitor classroom activities to avoid those activities that may involve the use of certain foods in the presence of a life-threatening food allergic child. For example, do not use peanuts for counting activities or craft activities (e.g. bird feeders).
- School administrators are responsible for assuring that substitutes are notified of students with severe food allergies.

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Teachers of a student with severe food allergies will know the signs and symptoms of a severe allergic reaction as provided in the student's individual health care plan, and be aware of and implement the emergency plan if a reaction is suspected.
- Teachers will assist students in the same classroom(s) as a student with food allergies to understand the nature and seriousness of severe food allergy.
- Teachers will develop a plan for notification of substitutes about a student with a severe food allergy.
- Teachers will review planned classroom activities and omit those activities that involve the use of certain food products, if known, in the presence of a student with life threatening food allergies in the class. The activity may be used if it can be modified to use an alternative to the life threatening food products.
- Teachers should request parents of other students in the class of a student with life threatening food allergies to avoid foods for a class treat containing the life threatening allergens.
- Teachers should request parents of other students in the class of a student with life threatening food allergies to provide an ingredients list for any food sent in for a class treat.
- Staff will notify the parents of a student with life-threatening food allergies of occasions when class treats will be shared and will share any ingredient list with the parent for their review. Parents of the students with allergies will review this list and determine if the treat is acceptable or if an alternate snack should be provided. **If no list is provided, the product is not to be shared with the class.** In addition, teachers should encourage the use of alternate non-food treats when a food allergic student is in the class. The assistance of the school PTA should be sought to support this practice.
- Teachers will assure that any classroom surface that has been exposed to food be thoroughly cleaned by an adult at the conclusion of the activity to prevent possible cross contamination of educational materials.
- Teachers will provide students the opportunity to wash their hands after every classroom activity involving food. Alcohol hand sanitizers do **NOT** remove food residues and are **not** an acceptable way to clean hands after an activity involving food. Certain hand wipes are acceptable and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- Teachers will notify parents and health services staff in advance of parties, field trips, or other special events so that appropriate plans for the student's safety may be made.
- Teachers will respond immediately and appropriately to reports of students being teased or bullied about their allergies.

FOOD SERVICES RESPONSIBILITIES

- Food Services personnel will, upon request, make available to parents within three days, the manufacturers ingredients list of foods served in the cafeteria. However, ingredients lists may not be available for all foods served. Manufacturers may change ingredients included in foods without notice. Parents may screen school lunch ingredients lists for potential allergens at www.hcpss.org/food-services .
- Monthly cafeteria menus may be accessed on line at www.hcpss.org/food-services. You may also subscribe to your child's school's monthly lunch list at the same site.
- Food Services personnel will clearly identify snack foods of which they are aware contain peanut products. This applies where there is a peanut allergic student in the school.
- Food Services personnel will assist with the implementation of individual 504 plans for food allergies when appropriate.

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES RESPONSIBILITIES

- Bus drivers will be notified of a student with severe food allergy on their bus by school health services personnel or by transportation personnel.
- Bus drivers will assure that students are aware of the “no eating on the bus” rule.
- Exceptions shall be made for students with diabetes
- Bus drivers will notify their supervisor if students violate the “no eating on the bus” rule.
- Bus drivers of a student with a severe life threatening food allergy will know the signs and symptoms of a severe allergic reaction and understand how to respond to this medical emergency.
- Bus drivers will respond to an allergic reaction in accordance with the individual transportation emergency plan developed for the child.

RESOURCES FOR SCHOOLS

Asthma and Allergy Foundation Maryland – Greater Washington DC Chapter

1498 Reisterstown Rd., Suite 324, Baltimore, MD 21208 Phone: 410-484-2054. Toll free: 1-800-7ASTHMA 1-800-727-8462. National website: <http://www.aafa.org> State website: <http://www.aafa-md.org>

AAFA Maryland-Greater Washington DC Chapter can provide training for school nurses and packages for individual schools that are assembled for school's needs.

Contents can include: Book: Taming Asthma and Allergy by Controlling your environment: A Guide for Patients by Dr. Robert A. Wood M.D., lung posters, peak flow meters, spacers, nebulizer tubing, and various information sheets.

The Food Allergy Research & Education

7925 Jones Branch Dr., Suite 1100, McLean, VA 22102

Phone: 1-800-929-4040. Website: <http://foodallergy.org>

Free Food Allergy Information for School Staff.

The comprehensive, multimedia program includes a video, an EpiPen trainer, a poster, and a binder filled with more than 100 pages of information and standardized forms.

The American Lung Association

Maryland State Office 211 East Lombard Street, Baltimore, MD. Phone: 202-747-5541

Toll free: 1-888-415-5757 State website: <http://www.lungmd.org>

National website: <http://www.lung.org>

The American Lung Association's program for schools: Open Airways for Schools for students 8-11.