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Helping Schools become FoodAllergy SmartTM

www.foodallergysmart.org

Recommended School Training: How to CARETM for Kids with Food Allergies

Teachers and staff who supervise food-allergic students should receive annual training on:

Comprehending the basic medical facts.

Just six facts will give educators the medical knowledge they need to confidently care for food allergic kids:

- A food allergy is an overreaction of the immune system that can affect any system of the body, including the respiratory, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and skin systems.
- Ingestion of even a minute amount of the allergen can trigger this overreaction and cause a variety of symptoms ranging from mild nausea or itching to *anaphylaxis* (a systemic allergic reaction that can kill within minutes).
- There is no cure for food allergies. Strict avoidance of the allergenic food is the only way to prevent a potentially life-threatening reaction.
- An allergic reaction can occur up to two hours (and sometimes, though rarely, up to four hours) after ingestion.
- The severity and progression of an allergic reaction is unpredictable: a seemingly mild reaction can turn fatal within minutes.
- Anaphylactic reactions are treated by prompt administration of epinephrine. Time is of the essence and may mean the difference between life and death. Transport to an emergency room must follow. Repeat administration of epinephrine may be required.

Avoiding the Allergen.

Because strict avoidance of the allergen is the only way to prevent reactions, it is critical that teachers and staff be given practical information on how to make the classroom/lunchroom/playground safe for food-allergic students. Topics to cover include:

- How to read food ingredient labels. (Demonstrations with actual labels are especially helpful.)
- How to prevent cross-contamination by using proper cleaning methods for hands and tables.
- A reminder that the food we eat is not the only potential source of allergens: art supplies (ie, clay, paints, egg cartons), hand lotions or soaps may also contain food allergens.

Recognizing a Reaction.

Early recognition of symptoms saves lives. Learn what to look for. Remember that reactions may progress rapidly and unpredictably and that skin symptoms may not necessarily be present.

- Mouth - Itching, tingling, or swelling of lips, tongue, mouth
- Nose - Hayfever-like symptoms: runny, itchy nose, sneezing, watery/red eyes
- Skin - Hives, itchy rash, swelling of the face or extremities, flushing
- Gut - Nausea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea
- Throat - Hacking cough, tightening of throat, hoarseness, difficulty swallowing
- Lung - Shortness of breath, repetitive cough, wheezing
- Heart - Thready pulse, low blood pressure, fainting, pale, blueness

Enacting Emergency Action Plan!

Every school should have its own emergency protocols. Teachers and staff must be taught exactly what to do in the event of an anaphylaxis emergency, particularly what their school's protocol is for:

- Administering the epinephrine auto-injector (EpipenTM or TwinjectTM).
- Calling 911 and alerting the operator that you have an allergic emergency and need epinephrine.