

Allergy Aware and Nut-Free Policy

Appendix

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis ("ana-fil-ax-is") is a severe and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction, often happening within minutes but sometimes after hours. It occurs because the body's immune system reacts inappropriately to a substance it wrongly perceives as a threat. An interaction between the substance ('allergen') and an antibody called Immunoglobulin E (IgE) releases chemicals, such as histamine, causing an allergic reaction. In the skin, this causes an itchy rash, swelling and flushing. Many pupils (not just those with asthma) can develop breathing problems, similar to an asthma attack. The throat can tighten, causing swallowing and breathing difficulties, and a high pitched sound (stridor) on breathing in.

Allergens that can trigger anaphylaxis include:

- foods e.g. peanuts, tree nuts (such as almond, walnut, cashew, pecan, hazelnut), milk, cheese and other dairy foods, egg, wheat, fish, shellfish, seafood, celery, celeriac, sesame, mustard, soya, fruits, etc.
- insect stings e.g. bee, wasp
- medications e.g. antibiotics such as penicillin, pain relief such as ibuprofen, aspirin
- latex e.g. rubber gloves, balloons, swimming caps
- more rarely, animals e.g. horses, cats, dogs. In some cases, there's no obvious trigger. This is known as idiopathic anaphylaxis. This is not an exhaustive list. Pupils can have more than one allergy.

The severity of reaction can be influenced by a number of factors, including minor illnesses (such as a cold), asthma, exercise, and in the case of food the amount eaten, touched or inhaled.

Food: Severe reactions can occur within minutes, while others can occur over 1-2 hours after eating. Severe reactions to dairy foods (e.g. cheese) are often delayed, and may mimic a severe asthma attack without any other symptoms (e.g. skin rash) being present.

- Insect stings: severe reactions are often faster, occurring within 10-15 minutes

Symptoms vary depending on the allergen:

Symptoms

The symptoms of anaphylaxis usually start between three and sixty minutes after contact with the allergen. Less commonly they can occur a few hours or even days after contact.

Other symptoms:

- Swollen eyes, lips, genitals, hands, feet and other areas (this is called angioedema)
- Itching

- Sore, red, itchy eyes
- Changes in heart rate
- A sudden feeling of extreme anxiety or apprehension
- Itchy skin or nettle-rash (hives)
- Unconsciousness due to very low blood pressure
- Abdominal cramps, vomiting or diarrhoea, or nausea and fever.

Anaphylaxis varies in severity. Sometimes it causes mild itchiness and swelling, but in some people it can cause sudden death. If symptoms start soon after contact with the allergen and rapidly worsen, this indicates that the reaction is more severe.

Staff

Staff and volunteers must ensure they do not bring in or consume nut products in school and ensure they follow good hand washing practice.

Caution must be taken at certain times of year such as Easter and Christmas. If Staff distribute confectionary, care must be taken to ensure that no nuts are included in the product. Fruit sweets such as Haribo are a better alternative. Particular products that are a cause for concern are: - Celebrations - Roses - Heroes - Quality Street.

All product packaging must be checked for warnings directed at nut allergy sufferers and if the following or similar are displayed, the product must not be used in school. Packaging must be checked for:

- o **Not suitable for nut allergy sufferers;**
- o **This product contains nuts;**
- o **This product may contain traces nuts;**
- o **Indicating this is unsuitable for school consumption.**