

Good Shepherd Allergy Awareness Committee

What Does the Allergy Awareness Committee Do?

The Allergy Awareness Committee is committed to a safe and happy learning environment for your child. We are here to assist parents and staff with children who have severe allergies. Some of the things that our committee has been responsible for include: hosting an annual Allergy Awareness Week, setting up Allergy Awareness displays, implemented the Treasure Chests for primary grades, implemented the Birthday Recognition program for all students, provide Welcome Packages for parents of children with life-threatening allergies, have developed safety checklists, held poster contests and welcomed Guest Speakers.

Our Mission

At Good Shepherd Catholic School we believe in protecting the social, physical and emotional safety and well being of all our students, staff, and visitors. Each person is valued and respected for his or her uniqueness and individuality. The Allergy Awareness Committee is committed to providing support to the school administration in educating our Catholic School Community by developing awareness, by providing resources, support and knowledge.

What is Anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction. It can be life-threatening. Food is the most common cause of anaphylaxis, but insect stings, medicine, latex, or exercise can also cause a reaction. The most common food allergens are peanuts, tree nuts, and seafood, egg and milk products.

Anaphylaxis affects multiple body systems: skin, upper and lower respiratory, gastrointestinal and cardiovascular. Anaphylactic shock is an explosive overreaction of the body's immune system to a triggering agent (allergen). It can be characterized by swelling, difficulty breathing, abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, circulatory collapse, coma and death.

Approximately 1-2 percent of Canadians live with the risk of an anaphylactic reaction. More than 50 percent of Canadians know someone with a life-threatening allergy.

Although anaphylaxis is most often diagnosed in childhood, it can also develop later in life. Living with anaphylaxis can be a challenge. People with this condition must learn how to avoid the allergen that causes their reaction. They must also be prepared to manage an unexpected reaction.

What Causes an Anaphylactic Reaction?

Food is the most common cause of anaphylaxis but insect stings, medicine, latex, immunotherapy or exercise can also cause a reaction. 90% of serious food allergy reactions are caused by: Peanuts, Shellfish, Milk, Tree Nuts, Fish, Eggs, Soy, Sesame Seeds and Wheat.

What are the Symptoms of Anaphylaxis? Think F.A.S.T.!

F – Face: itchiness, redness, swelling of face and tongue

A – Airway: coughing, trouble breathing, swallowing or speaking

S – Stomach: stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea

T – Total body: hives, rash, swelling, weakness, paleness, sense of doom, loss of consciousness.

During an anaphylactic reaction any of these symptoms may appear.

What should someone do in the event of an Anaphylactic Reaction? A.C.T.

A – Administer the EpiPen at the first sign of a symptom in conjunction with the child's contact with their life threatening allergen.

C – Call 911: use the term 'ANAPHYLACTIC REACTION' when reporting an incident.

T – Transport to person by ambulance to the hospital.

How do I administer an EpiPen?

1. Remove the yellow or green cap from the storage tube

- Grasp the Auto-Injector with the black tip pointing down
- Pull off the grey safety cap

2. Place black tip against mid-outer thigh and press firmly until the Auto-Injector activates. Hold while counting for several seconds, then remove.

Frequently Asked Questions

How Much Exposure to an allergen will trigger a reaction?

In some children, the tiniest amount can trigger a life-threatening reaction. To put it into perspective – 1/1000th of a peanut/nut can be potentially fatal.

My child loves Pea Butter. Are we allowed to send Pea Butter instead of Peanut Butter?

We do not allow Pea Butter at our school, as it is so closely resembles Peanut Butter in smell and texture, that it would be impossible for our staff, or a child to determine for sure if it was safe or not.

Why can't I bring cupcakes in to celebrate my child's Birthday?

We understand how many families like to do things to make their child's birthday special at school. Our Allergy Awareness Committee has implemented a Birthday Recognition Program. Students are given something such as a sticker, bookmark or Birthday pencil recognition of their special day. In Addition, we place the child's name on our Birthday Recognition Wall during the month of their Birthday (July and August Birthdays are recognized as well). We encourage parents not to bring in food related products as the foods are often prepared in homes that have peanut/nut products. We would instead encourage you to bring in a non-food related treat, if you wished to do something in addition to our Program.

What foods are safe to bring to school?

Just remember to always read the label. Products that are not safe usually have a warning on them such as "may contain nuts" or processed in a facility that also processes peanuts/nuts". Products coming from a bulk food store/bulk food section are not safe as they are easily cross-contaminated with peanuts/nuts.

My child has a serious food allergy. How many EpiPens does my child need at the school?

You would need 3. We keep one of your child's EpiPens in the office, one in your child's classroom and your child should have one with him/her at all times.