



Allergy & Anaphylaxis  
Australia

Your trusted charity for allergy support



# TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOLS

## TEACHER RESOURCE

[www.foodallergyaware.com.au](http://www.foodallergyaware.com.au)

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This toolkit has been designed to help school students understand the importance of being allergy aware during Food Allergy Week. However, it can be used at any time of the year.

Food allergies are becoming increasingly common. In fact, 1 in 10 babies born in Australia today will develop a food allergy and some will be at risk of a life threatening allergic reaction. It is up to all of us to help people with severe allergy stay safe.

**Specifically, this resource will help students to:**

- understand the importance of supporting those with allergies
- encourage each other to be allergy aware
- assist children with food allergy to avoid their trigger foods
- learn about what action to take if someone may be having an allergic reaction

**Students will learn more about:**

- concepts related to health and living with a severe allergy
- the influence of peers, their understanding, their awareness, support and other factors linked to health issues and behaviours
- practicing health-enhancing behaviours to reduce risk
- how to advocate for personal and community health

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Permission is granted to copy and print this resource for educational purposes in schools.

## 1. FOOD ALLERGY BASICS

### a) What is food allergy?

Food allergy is an immune system response to a food protein that the body (mistakenly) believes is harmful. When a food which a person is allergic to is eaten, the immune system releases massive amounts of chemicals, triggering potentially life-threatening symptoms.

Currently there is no cure for food allergy, avoidance is the only way to prevent a reaction.

### b) What are the signs and symptoms of food allergy?

Food allergic reactions can range from mild to severe, severe being what we call anaphylaxis. Symptoms usually appear within two hours of a person eating a food (even a small amount) they are allergic to.

#### Mild to moderate allergic reaction

- swelling of the face, lips and eyes
- hives or welts
- tingling mouth
- abdominal pain, vomiting (*these are signs of a severe allergic reaction to insects*)

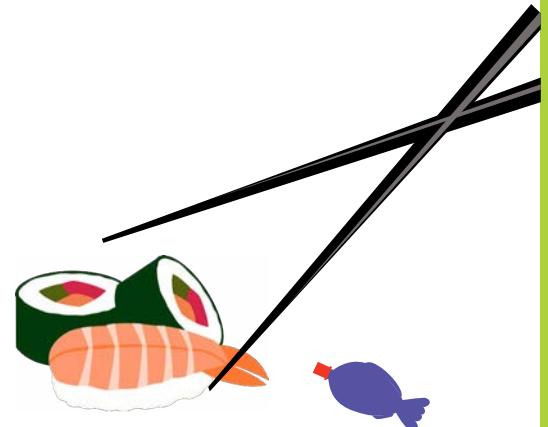
#### Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)

- difficult/noisy breathing
- swelling of the tongue
- swelling/tightness of the throat
- difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
- wheeze or persistent cough
- persistent dizziness or collapse
- pale and floppy (*young children*)

### c) What foods can cause food allergy?

Any food can trigger an allergic reaction and there are more than 170 foods reported to have caused a severe reaction. However, there are ten foods that cause 90 per cent of reactions, which are:

- peanuts
- tree nuts (e.g. almonds, walnuts, cashews)
- egg
- cow's milk
- sesame
- fish
- shellfish (e.g. oysters, prawns)
- soy
- wheat
- lupin



## 2. HOW CAN WE HELP KEEP EACH OTHER SAFE?

Keeping each other safe is all about AWARENESS, AVOIDANCE AND ACTION.

### AWARENESS

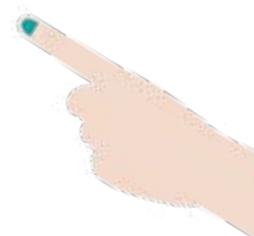
Know what your classmates are allergic to

### AVOIDANCE

Never share food and always wash your hands after you eat

### ACTION

Tell a teacher straight away if someone with allergies looks sick...  
even if they don't want you to!



## 3. CLASS DISCUSSIONS

These discussion topics aim to reduce the risk of an allergic reaction occurring at your school but also help to make the children more understanding of others with allergies.

**a) If you have a food allergy, it means that eating some foods can make you sick.  
Do you know anyone who has a food allergy? How do they manage their allergy?  
How can others help them?**

People with food allergies need to read every food label or ask what is in every meal they eat. Children at school are often only allowed to eat foods that mum or dad have checked. If a person with food allergy is not sure about what is in a food, they should not eat it.

We can help each other by following the three As.

#### AWARENESS

Know what your classmates are allergic to

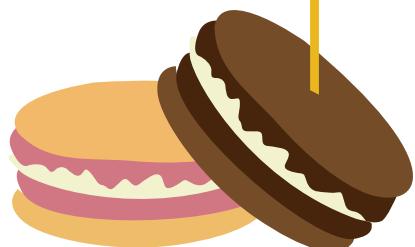
#### AVOIDANCE

Never share food and always wash your hands after you eat

#### ACTION

Tell a teacher straight away if someone with allergies looks sick...  
even if they don't want you to!

*nut free*



**b) Is it OK for someone with a food allergy to eat just a tiny amount?  
E.g. for someone with a milk allergy to just have a sip of a milkshake?**

No. A tiny amount of a food can trigger a very serious allergic reaction.

If children eat food they are allergic to symptoms usually appear within two hours but often they appear within minutes. Children often start out with a mild or moderate reaction that can sometimes progress to a severe allergic reaction. Sometimes a reaction is severe straight away.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF AN ALLERGIC REACTION

#### Mild to moderate allergic reaction

- swelling of the face, lips and eyes
- hives or welts
- tingling mouth
- abdominal pain, vomiting (*these are signs of a severe allergic reaction to insects*)

#### Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)

- difficult/noisy breathing
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- pale and floppy (*young children*)



**c) It's coming up to multicultural day at your primary school and parents are bringing in dishes from different cultures. There are many children at school with peanut and tree nut allergy. A letter is going home to ask parents not to send in dishes with peanuts and tree nuts. Why do you think your school has said this? How do you feel about this?**

The school has said no dishes with peanuts or tree nuts because some children are allergic to them and it would be safer not to have these at school. The children with any food allergy would still not be able to share the food brought in by other parents in case it is contaminated with their allergen. The parents of children with food allergy should make their children something appropriate for the day. The parents of a child with a food allergy have the best understanding of what their child can or cannot eat.

It is important that we care about others who need to do some things a little differently. Not having peanuts or tree nuts on international day is something we can easily do if everyone is informed. It means our friends with allergies can still be part of the learning and fun. Children without peanut or tree nut allergy can ask mum to make a dish with peanuts or tree nuts on another day and eat it at home, not at school.

**d) Your friend has an egg allergy. Someone in the class brings in their birthday cupcakes to share. Your friend can't have any because they contain egg. What can you do to make your friend feel better?**

Suggest to the person whose birthday it is ahead of time that your friend has a food allergy and maybe they could bring a non-food treat for them to help celebrate their birthday.

Parents often provide teachers with a treat jar for the child with food allergy and homemade safe cupcakes that can be placed in a labeled container in the school freezer. Then when a birthday celebration takes place, the child with a food allergy can still enjoy their own treat at celebration time.

**e) People living with food allergy have to think about the food they eat at every meal and snack. If they forget to ask what is in a food they could have an allergic reaction. How can you help them avoid taking these risks? How can the community support people with food allergy?**

- Talk to the person with allergies or their parents about helping to keep safe
- Remind them about their food allergy if they forget and accept food from someone
- When you are with them at school, try to eat food that is safe for them
- Always wash hands after eating
- Stick up for your friend if someone is teasing them about their allergy
- Tell a teacher if they feel sick, even if they don't want you too. You won't get in trouble



## 4. ACTIVITY – WHAT'S IN A FOOD?

### OBJECTIVES:

Learn about common allergens in foods and how to identify them. For example, ice-cream can contain nuts and chocolate may contain egg.

### MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Magazines or supermarket catalogues with pictures of food both packaged and unpackaged (*e.g. served on a plate*)
- Food packets for label reading
- Student lunchboxes

### ACTIVITIES:

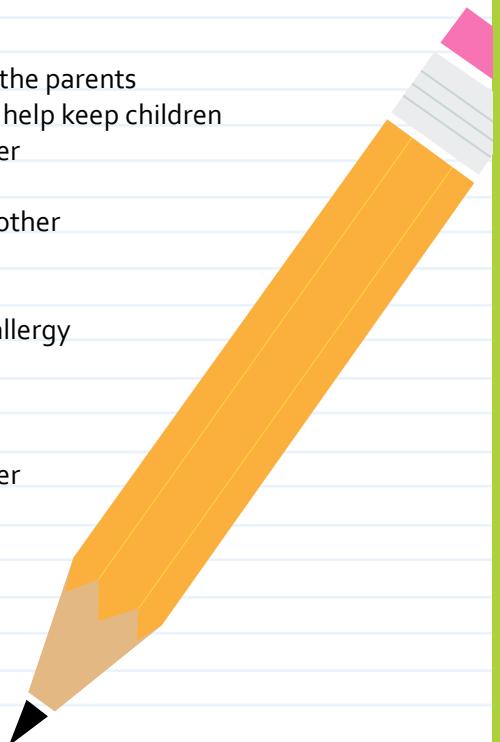
- Using pictures or even student lunchboxes, identify what allergens are in those foods
- Read labels of packaged food to find out what allergens may be in that food
- Discuss ingredients of homemade foods *e.g. sandwiches*
- Discuss the importance of awareness, avoidance and action

Additional classroom activities are available to download from [www.foodallergyaware.com.au](http://www.foodallergyaware.com.au) and information on allergen specifics at <https://allergyfacts.org.au/allergy-anaphylaxis/food-allergens>



## 5. TEACHER'S CHECKLIST

- Know the children in your school who are at risk of anaphylaxis by face
- Have a face-to-face meeting with parents of children with severe allergies and develop a plan that lists out strategies to reduce the risk of anaphylaxis.  
*NB: This is a separate document to the Action Plan of what to do should an allergic reaction takes place, which is completed by a doctor i.e. the ASCIA Action Plan*
- A copy of the Action Plan for Anaphylaxis should be kept with the student's adrenaline auto-injector (EpiPen) as well as on the wall in designated areas  
*e.g. the staffroom, sickbay, canteen*
- Keep information about your students with food and insect allergies somewhere that a relief teacher will be immediately aware of them
- Make sure you are trained on how to recognise an allergic reaction and what to do in an emergency
- Contact the parents of a child with severe allergy well ahead of time if there are any activities involving food, excursions, camps or any special activities
- Rethink lesson plans that use food. Talk about these lessons with the parents of a child with a food allergy. Substitute ingredients if you can, to help keep children with a food allergy safe or ask a parent to attend as a parent helper
- Avoid cross contamination from one child's snacks to those of another
- Do not offer food to any primary aged school children with food allergy unless you speak with their parents first
- At the end of a school year, work with the parents and new teacher in planning for food allergy management for the next year



## 6. USEFUL LINKS

**Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia**  
[www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au)

**Food Allergy Week**  
[www.foodallergyaware.com.au](http://www.foodallergyaware.com.au)

**Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy**  
This website has resources and a free anaphylaxis e-training course.  
[www.allergy.org.au](http://www.allergy.org.au)

**The EpiClub® Reminder Program**  
Register the expiry dates of your adrenalin auto-injector (EpiPen®) and they will send you a message when it is approaching, reminding you to replace the pens.  
[www.epicloud.com.au](http://www.epicloud.com.au)

**FREE ASCIA Anaphylaxis e-training course information**  
ASCIA has a FREE e-training course for the community.  
[anaphylaxis.ascia.org.au](http://anaphylaxis.ascia.org.au)



AWA  
RENESS

AVOIDANCE

ACTION



## Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia

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