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# Information for school staff about anaphylaxis

## What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe and sometimes sudden allergic reaction. It can occur when a susceptible person is exposed to an allergen, such as a food or insect sting. Although death is rare, an anaphylactic reaction always requires an emergency response. Prompt treatment with adrenaline is required to halt progression and can be lifesaving. Fortunately anaphylactic reactions are usually preventable by implementing strategies for avoiding allergens.

Common allergens that can trigger anaphylaxis are:

- foods (e.g. peanuts and other nuts, shellfish and fish; milk and egg, wheat, sesame and soy)
- insect stings (e.g. bee, wasp, jack jumper ants)
- medications (e.g. antibiotics, aspirin)
- latex (e.g. rubber gloves, balloons, swimming caps).

This is not, however, an exhaustive list of possible allergens.

The severity of an anaphylactic reaction can be influenced by a number of factors including minor illness, asthma, and, in the case of food allergens, the amount eaten. In the case of severe food allergies, an anaphylactic reaction is usually triggered by ingestion of the food. Contact skin reactions to an allergen are very unlikely to trigger anaphylaxis.

The school can help by assisting the student in the avoidance of allergens through health care planning. The early recognition of the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis may save lives by allowing the earlier administration of emergency care and contact of the appropriate emergency medical services.

All staff need to be aware of students diagnosed at risk of anaphylaxis and the relevant parts of their individual health care plan, including the emergency response for anaphylaxis which is outlined in their ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis, including:

- signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis
- administration of adrenaline autoinjectors
- strategies to avoid exposure to known allergens
- location of the adrenaline autoinjector.

## Who is at risk of anaphylaxis?

Students who are highly allergic to any of the above allergens are at risk of anaphylaxis if exposed. Those who have had a previous anaphylactic reaction are at increased risk.

## How can you recognise an anaphylactic reaction?

Reactions usually begin within minutes of exposure and can progress rapidly at any time over a period of two hours.

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**In some cases, anaphylaxis is preceded by signs of a mild to moderate allergic reaction including:**

- Swelling of face, lips and eyes
- Hives or welts on the skin
- Tingling mouth
- Stomach pain, vomiting (these are signs of a mild to moderate allergic reaction to most allergens, however, in insect allergy these are signs of anaphylaxis).

**A severe allergic reaction is indicated by any one of the following:**

- Difficult/noisy breathing
- Swelling of tongue
- Swelling/tightness in throat
- Difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
- Wheeze or persistent cough
- Loss of consciousness and/or collapse
- Pale and floppy (in young children)

### Staff responsibility in an emergency

Any school staff member must, when necessary, reasonably assist in an emergency.

### What should I do?

It is important to know which students have anaphylaxis and where their adrenaline auto-injector is located. Anaphylaxis always requires an emergency response. You should administer the adrenaline autoinjector and call an ambulance.

The ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis (Appendix 7) provides instructions for administering the adrenaline auto-injector and should be kept with the adrenaline autoinjector, in an accessible location.

**For an individual with asthma who is also at risk of anaphylaxis, the adrenaline autoinjector should be used first, followed by asthma reliever medication, calling an ambulance, continuing asthma first aid and following the instructions on the student's ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis. Early recognition of symptoms and immediate treatment could save a student's life.**

### Anaphylaxis Training

All NSW government schools are required to arrange for face to face [Recognition and Management of Anaphylaxis training](#) (intranet) to be delivered annually. Each school is required to ensure that a significant proportion of staff attend the annual training, subject to essential student supervision arrangements.

This training has been designed to complement the anaphylaxis e-learning and focuses on responding to anaphylaxis. It includes responding to the signs and symptoms, the administration of an adrenaline autoinjector and incorporates scenarios to assist learning.

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Delivery of the Recognition and Management of Anaphylaxis training is arranged through the Department's panel of approved registered training organisations. See the [Face to Face CPR and Anaphylaxis Training](#) intranet page for more information.

In addition, the Department's [anaphylaxis e-learning](#) (intranet) module is mandated for all permanent, temporary and casual employees who work in schools. The self-paced e-learning module is completed in lessons. Staff are required to complete the learning module every 2 years.

Your principal or delegated executive staff will inform staff about anaphylaxis training and advise them of relevant details of the individual student's allergy/s, including as appropriate, information about other health conditions and/or disabilities that may impact on the health, safety and wellbeing of the student.

Undertaking the anaphylaxis e-learning module does not replace the requirement for your school to schedule the Recognition and Management of Anaphylaxis Training annually.

Schools can access further information about the e-learning and face to face training from the [anaphylaxis e-learning](#) module intranet page.

Assisted School Travel Support Officers undertake anaphylaxis training through the Assisted School Travel Program.

All teacher education students are required to provide proof of having undertaken the online [ASCIA anaphylaxis e-training](#) before commencing a professional experience placement in a NSW government school or preschool. This anaphylaxis training must have been completed in the last two years.

All schools are responsible for administering an emergency response which may include a response to a first time episode of anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis training provides staff with essential information about recognising and providing an emergency response to anaphylaxis.

Note: All preschools are required to comply under the [National Quality Framework](#) for Early Childhood Education and Care and are subject to mandatory training requirements set out in the Education and Care Services National Regulations. By following the anaphylaxis training requirements for NSW government schools, Department preschools will meet these mandatory training requirements.

### Legal liability of staff administering medication

School education authorities have a duty of care to take reasonable steps to keep students safe while they attend school. They meet their duty of care obligations through the actions of their staff. This includes the administration of an adrenaline autoinjector and/or any other emergency care provided when a student has an anaphylactic reaction at school or during school activities.

Staff acting in the course of their employment enjoy full legal protection in relation to any personal liability claims. The education authorities are liable for their employees regarding claims for compensation that may be made in the unlikely event of a student suffering injury as a result of an employee's actions in dealing with anaphylaxis. The legal principle involved is called vicarious liability. Essentially this means employers are responsible for what employees do as part of their work.

The only exception will be where the actions of the employee amount to serious and wilful misconduct. Carelessness, inadvertence or a simple mistake do not amount to serious and willful misconduct.

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# Further information about anaphylaxis

### NSW Department of Education and Communities

- Advice on a wide range of issues relating to student health in public schools can be found at <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/studenthealth/index.php>
- Advice specific to anaphylaxis can be found at <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/studenthealth/conditions/anaphylaxis/index.php>
- Further advice or assistance can be obtained from the learning and wellbeing officers in your local Educational Services team. The [Public Schools NSW](#) intranet page includes a link to find your school's Educational Services contacts
- Advice on managing risk associated with anaphylaxis in schools can be found on the Work Health and Safety intranet at <https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/workhealthandsafety/risk-management-student-services/anaphylaxis> (intranet)
- Information about online anaphylaxis training for school staff is at <https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/workhealthandsafety/esafety-program/anaphylaxis-ettraining-aptss> (intranet)
- Information about face to face anaphylaxis training for school staff is at <https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/workhealthandsafety/esafety-program/specialist-anaphylaxis-training> (intranet)
- Allergy and Anaphylaxis Management within the Curriculum P-12 Procedures is at at <http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/schoolsweb/studentsupport/studenthealth/conditions/anaphylaxis/guidelines/anacurric.pdf>.
- PDHPE support is at [http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/pdhpe/pdhpe7\\_10/health\\_education/ana\\_intro.htm](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/pdhpe/pdhpe7_10/health_education/ana_intro.htm)
- The Preschool Handbook, for the Department's 100 preschools, includes a Wellbeing section with important information about supporting health care needs and is at <https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/early-learning/preschool-handbook>
- Early Childhood Education and Care information: <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/what-we-offer/regulation-and-accreditation/early-childhood-education-care>

### **The Sydney Children's Hospital Network**

Allergies and Anaphylaxis factsheets <http://www.chw.edu.au/parents/factsheets/>

### **Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)**

Anaphylaxis resources, including ASCIA Action Plans <http://www.allergy.org.au/>

### **Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia**

A support organisation for anyone needing to manage allergy and the risk of anaphylaxis, including individuals, families, health, childcare and teaching professionals, food industry, workplaces etc. The organisation has a Medical Advisory Board which consists of ASCIA members. More information and educational/awareness raising resources can be found at [Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia](#). Phone: 1300 728 000.

Information about training in Appendix 5 updated on 11 November 2015