



Discussion Guide

Approaching the management of anaphylaxis in schools/childcare

INSIGHTS FROM A&AA'S PRESIDENT

Life has many dangers. We are taught how to live safely, to be responsible beings. People at risk of anaphylaxis have an added 'danger'. As a parent of a child at risk of anaphylaxis, I know just how much I want my son to NEVER have another anaphylactic reaction. We speak of milk or nuts or sesame as being like arsenic or rat poison. Our fear motivates us to do what we can to keep individuals with life threatening allergies safe. Our knowledge, which increases with time, experience and research, motivates us to teach individuals how to manage all aspects of this condition in every day life.

Think of road safety for a moment. The road is a very dangerous place for young children. As adults, we slowly educate children on the dangers and guide them across the road with added safety. Roads are NEVER risk free but we teach children what to do to help keep themselves safe. ie: look left/right; never cross without an adult until they are at an age when they can be trusted with decision making of when and where to cross the road. We can NEVER eliminate the risk of injury completely but we can certainly educate on how to best manage crossing the road safely.

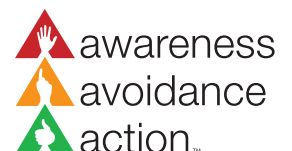
Having a severe allergy is a little like crossing a road. It is always dangerous but we can work on strategies to make it safer. Someone at risk of anaphylaxis is always at risk but we as parents, as childcare workers, teachers or individuals do what we can to minimise that risk.

It's so important for our members and those caring for children to implement strategies that address the overall, long-term management of severe allergy. I encourage people with young children to minimise the allergen as part of an overall management plan. Beware of 'banning' of food from a school environment. Implementing this may not be realistic. Can we say peanut is 'banned' if so much food 'May contain traces of peanut'? Some schools state they have 'banned' egg. Is this real or is it creating a false sense of security? Can we ever really completely remove peanut or egg or wheat from a school or childcare environment? There is no such thing as 'allergen free'. How often do places that have a ban find the allergen has inadvertently 'slipped' in? We certainly promote minimisation of allergens in primary schools and childcare facilities but we must not assume that a food has ever really been eradicated.



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Our focus needs to be on how we can manage to keep our children safe - how to cross that road safely. We must step ahead and educate our youngsters from an early age so that they can eventually learn how to care for themselves.

- Always eat food that mum or dad has packed from home.
- Do not accept food from your peers.
- Always have children in the care of people who know they have an allergy, can recognise signs of a reaction and know how to use the adrenaline/epinephrine autoinjector (EpiPen®) in an emergency.
- Always have the adrenaline/epinephrine autoinjector easily accessible.
- Have an individualised Action Plan for Anaphylaxis with the emergency medication.
- Minimise the allergen where possible i.e. ask parents not to send peanut butter, egg sandwiches or milk shakes. (This is one of many strategies that will help keep the young child safe.)
- Separate children with food that contains the allergen in younger age groups.
- Have children eat in a designated area before they go out to play in playground.
- Provide special 'safe' treats for your child and encourage non-food rewards at school/childcare.
- Educate all staff on anaphylaxis and the special needs of particular children.
- Make sure staff have had specific Anaphylaxis Training.
- Educate other children on allergy issues.
- Distribute resource materials.

The list of safety strategies goes on and on. The list is different depending on each child, their allergies, their age, their level of maturity and responsibility and so on. As adults we must nurture the need for our children to become independent and learn to look after themselves in a world where there are peanuts and eggs and they do have to cross busy roads.

Maria Said

A&AA President

Mother of Alex aged 20, allergic to peanut and at risk of anaphylaxis

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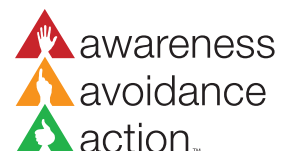
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