



Managing Allergies

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Many children in education and care services experience an allergic reaction when exposed to certain foods or substances that affect their immune system. Some allergic reactions are severe such as anaphylaxis.

What is an Allergy?

An allergy occurs when a person's immune system reacts to substances in the environment that are harmless for most people. These substances are known as allergens and are found in house dust mites, pets, pollen, insects, moulds, foods and some medicines. If a child in your service has an allergy it is important to know the specific substance that causes the reaction.

What is Anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a more severe allergic reaction that can affect the skin, respiratory, gastro-intestinal and cardiovascular systems. It requires immediate medical attention. Anaphylaxis usually occurs within 20 minutes to 2 hours after exposure to the allergen and can rapidly become life threatening.

Knowing the triggers is the first step in prevention. It is important that children and educators in an education and care service are aware of a child's food allergens and/or other triggers. Educators need to be able to recognise symptoms of anaphylaxis and be prepared to respond without delay according to the child's Medical Management Plan.

Common Triggers

- **Food** - Milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, fish, shellfish, wheat and soy are the most common food triggers however; any food can trigger anaphylaxis. It is important to understand that some children may have a life threatening reaction from exposure to even very small amounts of food. In some extreme instances just the smell of particular foods being cooked or even touching someone

who has eaten the food can trigger a reaction.

- **Bites and Stings** - Bee, wasp and jack jumper ant stings are the most common triggers of anaphylaxis to insect stings. For some children even ticks, green ants and fire ants can also trigger anaphylaxis.
- **Medication** - Both over the counter and prescribed medications can cause life threatening allergic reactions for some children as can some herbal medicines.

Common Symptoms

In some instances, educators may not be aware that a child has an allergy as the child may have their first allergic reaction at the education and care service. Some common symptoms include:

- Mild to moderate allergic reaction
- Nose and eye irritation
- Hives and eczema
- Tingling of the mouth
- Welts or body redness
- Swelling of the face, lips, eyes
- Vomiting, abdominal pain
- Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)
 - Difficult/noisy breathing
 - Swelling of the tongue
 - Swelling or tightness in the throat
 - Difficulty talking or hoarse voice
 - Wheeze or persistent cough
 - Persistent dizziness or collapse
 - Pale and floppy (young children)

Your obligations

The Education and Care Services National Regulations require an approved provider to have a medical conditions policy that sets out practices relating to the management, support and care for children with medical conditions including children with allergies. (Regulation 90)

These policies and practices must be reviewed regularly for each child as their particular circumstance is likely to change over time.

If a child at your service is diagnosed as having an allergy, you are required to obtain a detailed medical management plan for that child and subsequently develop a risk minimisation plan to ensure that:

- the risks relating to the child's allergy are discussed and known
- practices and procedures are in place regarding safe food handling, preparation and consumption of food that triggers the allergy;
- the procedures outline identifying the child and the details in the individual medical management plan,
- includes the management of risks associated with excursions
- the child's specific medication such as an EpiPen is accessible

Putting the plan into practice

While it is a requirement to have documented policies and procedures, and the appropriate medical management and risk minimisation plans, the practical implications of managing the day to day health care needs of each child must be considered. Ongoing communication is one way to ensuring this is possible. As part of the communication plan you must:

- ensure that all staff at the service, including relief staff and volunteers:
 - follow the service policies and practices
 - are aware of the children in the education and care service who have allergies;
 - are aware of the triggers that cause the allergy for each child understand food ingredients and ensure that ingredient labels are checked regularly;
 - are aware of meal time procedures for children with anaphylaxis and/or allergy conditions. It is important that a regular review of meal time procedures is conducted so that all of the staff are involved in ongoing discussions about the procedures and identifying any areas for improvement;
 - adequately support the child with allergy to help them tell others of the nature of their allergy, and to refrain from accepting food from others;
 - support other children to be aware of the potentially serious nature of a child's allergy and how to help them if needed.
- ensure all parents and families are aware of the known triggers that pose a risk to each child to prevent these triggers being brought into the service;
- ensure that there is a clear process in place to outline how parents can communicate any changes to the medical management and risk minimisation plan and how these changes are effected in the service;

- ensure that you have signs, photos and information on how to respond to anaphylaxis on display and accessible throughout your service.

Approved training

In accordance with the National Regulations at all times that children are being educated and cared for there must be at least one educator who holds a current approved:

- first aid qualification,
- anaphylaxis management training; and
- emergency asthma management training.

To meet this requirement, the same person can hold one or more of the above qualifications however, the educator must be on site and immediately available in the event of an emergency. Training qualifications must be maintained.

The list of approved first aid qualifications is provided on the ACECQA website at: <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/First-aid-qualifications-andtraining>

Support organisations

Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia
<https://www.allergyfacts.org.au/>

Australian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)
www.allergy.org.au/health-professionals/anaphylaxis-resources

Medical management plans
<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/supporting-students/health-e-safety-and-wellbeing/health-care-plans>

Contact details

Early Childhood Services
Phone: 08 8226 0077 or 1800 882 413
Website: www.esb.sa.gov.au
Email: EducationStandardsBoard@sa.gov.au