

What is anaphylaxis?

1. Anaphylaxis is an acute, severe allergic reaction requiring immediate medical attention. It usually occurs within seconds or minutes of exposure to a certain food or substance, but on rare occasions may happen after a few hours.
2. Common triggers include peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, eggs, cow's milk, fish, certain fruits such as kiwifruit, and also penicillin, latex and the venom of stinging insects (such as bees, wasps or hornets).
3. The most severe form of allergic reaction is anaphylactic shock, when the blood pressure falls dramatically and the patient loses consciousness. Fortunately this is rare among young children below teenage years. More commonly among children there may be swelling in the throat, which can restrict the air supply, or severe asthma. Any symptoms affecting the breathing are serious.
4. Less severe symptoms may include tingling or itching in the mouth, hives anywhere on the body, generalised flushing of the skin or abdominal cramps, nausea and vomiting. Even where mild symptoms are present, the child should be watched carefully. They may be heralding the start of a more serious reaction.

Medicine and Control

5. The treatment for a severe allergic reaction is an injection of adrenaline (also known as epinephrine). Pre-loaded injection devices containing one measured dose of adrenaline are available on prescription. The devices are available in two strengths – adult and junior.
6. Should a severe allergic reaction occur, the adrenaline injection should be administered into the muscle of the upper outer thigh. **An ambulance should always be called.**
7. Staff that volunteer to be trained in the use of these devices can be reassured that they are simple to administer. Adrenaline injectors, given in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, are a well-understood and safe delivery mechanism. It is not possible to give too large a dose using this device. The needle is not seen until after it has been withdrawn from the child's leg. In cases of doubt it is better to give the injection than to hold back.
8. The decision on how many adrenaline devices the school or setting should hold, and where to store them, has to be decided on an individual basis between the Headteacher, the child's parents and medical staff involved.
9. Where children are considered to be sufficiently responsible to carry their emergency treatment on their person, there should always be a spare set kept safely which is not locked away and is accessible to all staff. We recognise it is often quicker for staff to use an injector that is with the child rather than taking time to collect one from a central location.

Staff that are susceptible to severe anaphylaxis should ensure they carry their own epipen.

10. Studies have shown that the risks for allergic children are reduced where an individual health care plan is in place. Reactions become rarer and when they occur they are mostly mild. The plan will need to be agreed by the child's parents, the school and the treating doctor.

11. Important issues specific to anaphylaxis to be covered include:

- anaphylaxis – what may trigger it
- what to do in an emergency
- prescribed medicine
- food management
- precautionary measures

12. Once staff have agreed to administer medicine to an allergic child in an emergency, a training session will need to be provided by local health services. Staff should have the opportunity to practice with trainer injection devices. At Robert Peel we aim to update staff annually.

13. Day to day policy measures are needed for food management, awareness of the child's needs in relation to the menu, individual meal requirements and snacks in school. When kitchen staff are employed by a separate organisation, it is important to ensure that the catering supervisor is fully aware of the child's particular requirements. Children have been asked not to bring in peanut butter as part of their packed lunch and the kitchen is able to provide meals that do not contain nuts if required.

14. Children who are at risk of severe allergic reactions are not ill in the usual sense. They are normal children in every respect – except that if they come into contact with a certain food or substance, they may become very unwell. At Robert Peel we aim to ensure children are not stigmatised or made to feel different. We also recognise that it is important, too, to allay parents' fears by reassuring them that prompt and efficient action will be taken in accordance with medical advice and guidance.

15. Anaphylaxis is manageable. With sound precautionary measures and support from the staff, school life may continue as normal for all concerned.

16. Charity Stall items should be free from nuts. Any edible product being sold should have a list of ingredients attached and pupils should always ask prior to purchasing.