

Anaphylaxis

Imagine for a moment that you have just finished eating a delicious cookie that your neighbor brought over. You are by yourself. Almost immediately your mouth and throat begin itching and your lips, tongue and the inside of your mouth begins to swell. You feel sick to your stomach, short of breath and begin coughing repetitively. Now you feel a sense of tightness in your throat with uncontrollable itching. Your sense of impending doom is not imagined; it is real!

Anaphylaxis is often triggered by substances that are injected, ingested, inhaled, or by skin contact and thereby gain access into the body. An explosive reaction involving the skin, lungs, nose, throat, and gastrointestinal tract can then result. Although severe cases of anaphylaxis can occur within seconds or minutes of exposure and be fatal if untreated, many reactions are milder and can be ended with prompt medical therapy.

Minute amounts of allergens may cause a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction. The more times that a child or adult is exposed to the allergen the more severe the reaction will be. Anaphylactic Shock can lead to death in a matter of minutes if left untreated.

Tree Nuts are different from Peanuts. Tree Nuts include cashews, pecans, pine nuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, etc., nut oil, marzipan, pesto, nougat, etc. Did you know that Hacky Sacks are filled with crushed walnut shells?

What are not Nuts? Coconut, Nutmeg, Water Chestnuts, Shea Nuts, Lychee Nuts.

Here at _____, we have over _____ or **several** students who have life threatening food allergies, mostly to tree nuts and peanuts. When sending treats to class, please read labels carefully and send only treats that are nut and peanut free. Encourage your child to wash her/his hands after eating. Please review the signs and symptoms of "Anaphylaxis" with your child. Your child could save the life of another.

--Lynne Calame, RN, District Nurse