

Where Life-threatening Allergies are Concerned, There is no Substitute for Being Informed

The incidence of severe allergic reactions has been rising at an alarming rate, especially food allergies, and research suggests that the prevalence has yet to peak. If the allergic reaction becomes severe it is then known as anaphylaxis, a life-threatening event.

Food allergies are the leading cause of anaphylaxis outside of the hospital setting. Other common causes of anaphylaxis include allergies to latex, medications and insect bites.

It is important for school district employees to be prepared to provide care and an emergency response. As a substitute teacher, this includes you!

Symptoms

Some of the most dangerous symptoms of anaphylaxis include breathing difficulties, a drop in blood pressure, or shock, which are potentially fatal.

Common signs and symptoms include:

- Coughing, wheezing, throat tightening, difficulty breathing.
- Hives, itching, swelling.
- Stomach cramps, vomiting, diarrhea.
- Dizziness, fainting or loss of consciousness.
- Red, watery eyes, runny nose.
- Change of voice, change of skin color.
- Sense of doom.

What do I need to know?

As a substitute teacher you should find out if your schools have protocols for:

- Dealing with anaphylactic episodes.
- Avoidance of allergen exposure, and cross-contamination.
- Special accommodations like an Emergency Care Plan (ECP) for individual students in your class that have known severe allergies.

Where can I find this information?

Your best resources for this district specific information are the:

- School nurse
- Main office
- District office
- District website (for contact information)

Most of the above information was taken from:

Making a Difference, Caring for Students with Life threatening Allergies

(NYSDOH/NYSED, June 2008). For the complete document go to:

http://www.health.state.ny.us/professionals/protocols_and_guidelines/docs/caring_for_students_with_life_threatening_allergies.pdf