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Allergy Awareness Information

Dear Families,

A number of children currently enrolled at the school have medical conditions, which necessitate that they do not have contact with nuts, eggs, dairy products and foods that contain traces of these products.

Rationale

One of these medical conditions is Anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is a severe and sudden allergic reaction. It occurs when a person is exposed to an allergen (such as a food or an insect bite). Reactions usually begin within minutes of exposure and can progress rapidly over a period of up to two hours or more. Signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis include hives/rash, tingling in or around the mouth, abdominal pain, vomiting or diarrhea, facial swelling, cough or wheeze, difficulty breathing or swallowing, loss of consciousness or collapse, or cessation of breathing.

Although the reaction may develop within minutes after exposure to the allergen, there is usually adequate time to provide life-saving treatment, which is the injection of adrenaline. This can be administered via an EpiPen, which is a single dose auto-injector, prescribed by a doctor. The EpiPen is designed for use by people who do not have specialised nursing or medical training. Given reasonable precautions and a clear and simple management plan, children at risk of anaphylaxis should be included in school activities.

Anaphylaxis is best prevented by knowing and avoiding the allergens.

Aims

1. To ensure that all children in our care are given appropriate medical assistance in the event of an anaphylactic reaction.
2. To ensure that parent understand their legal and moral obligation to inform the school if they are aware that their child is at risk of an anaphylaxis reaction to foods.
3. To ensure that our entire student body understand the dangers of anaphylaxis and therefore do not knowingly share food with other students that may be dangerous or life threatening.

In 2021, St. Paul Apostle South Primary School will again be encouraging '**non-sharing**' of food. As a school community we always work towards developing an environment that is safe for everyone. In order for this to be implemented successfully, food containing nuts or trace elements of nuts should **NOT** be brought to school. We believe it is important for every family in the school to be aware of this condition so that we can try to avoid products containing nuts. Sometimes traces of foods are unknowingly left on children's hands and faces and could possibly be easily transferred onto chairs, pencils, scissors, taps or play equipment, which may potentially cause a serious allergic reaction.

Food Policy Measures

1. There is to be no trading and sharing of food, food utensils and food containers.
2. Students with severe food allergies must only eat food that has been prepared at home or provided by the parent.

3. Bottles, other drinks and lunch boxes provided by the parents for their children must be clearly labelled with the name of the child for whom they are intended.
4. Photos of all students with severe allergies will be displayed in classroom attendance rolls, first aid room and provided to specialist teachers.
5. The use of food in crafts, cooking classes and science experiments may need to be restricted depending on the allergies of particular children.
6. The risk of a life-threatening anaphylaxis from casual skin contact, even with highly allergenic foods such as peanuts, appears to be very low. On occasions casual skin contact will provoke urticarial reactions (hives). Simple hygiene measures such as hand washing are considered appropriate.
7. Our risk minimisation approach also includes asking parents of classmates to use alternatives to peanut butter and nutella on sandwiches and lunches and avoid sending raw nuts and muesli bars that contain nuts if a class member has a peanut allergy.
8. On school camps where there are children with a severe nut allergy, it will be requested that foods containing nuts are not taken or supplied, consistent with the nut minimisation policy in the school canteen.

Providing support to students at risk of anaphylaxis

It is the responsibility of the parent to notify the school that their child is at risk of an anaphylactic reaction either at the time of enrolment, or if the student is enrolled, as soon after diagnosis as possible.

As with other health conditions, schools provide support to assist the parent in the management of their child's health. For this support to be effective it is important that:

- a partnership is established between the parent and the school to share information and clarify expectations
- every reasonable effort is made to minimise the exposure of students at risk of an allergic reaction to known allergens within the school environment.
- an emergency response strategy is developed and implemented.

If written information provided by the parent confirms that their child has been assessed as being at risk of anaphylaxis, an emergency response plan will be formulated and EpiPen provided by the parent.

Educating a student's peers about anaphylaxis is important to gain their support for preventing exposure to allergens and to ensure that the affected student is protected from any teasing or provocation that may result in risk taking associated with allergens, e.g. nuts.

In anticipation of your cooperation, thank you for your understanding regarding this issue. It is greatly appreciated by the staff and those families directly affected. Please feel free to contact the school if you wish to discuss this further.

Thank you for your continued support

Paul Gleeson
Principal