

# *Severe Allergic Reactions in Schools: Fact Sheet for Parents*

## **Definition of a Severe Allergic Reaction:**

A Severe Allergic Reaction, anaphylaxis, occurs rapidly and causes a life-threatening response involving the whole body. These reactions usually occur within seconds to minutes of exposure. It is impossible to predict how severe the allergic reaction will be. The most severe cases may be fatal within minutes after exposure. Sometimes symptoms may disappear and then return later. Only trace amounts of the allergen may be needed to cause a severe reaction. True anaphylaxis is a medical emergency and requires immediate treatment in an emergency department of a hospital, where the person can be watched closely and life-saving treatment can be given. Unfortunately there is no cure for severe allergies.

## **Some common Causes of a Severe Allergic Reaction include, but are not limited to:**

1. Stinging Insects- bees, wasps, yellow jacket, hornet, fire ants
2. Food- Peanut, Tree Nuts, Milk, Egg, Soy, Wheat, Fish, Shellfish
3. Medications
4. Latex
5. Exercise (rare cases)
6. Exposure to Cold

## **How can a reaction be avoided?**

Strictly avoid contact with the substance (allergen) that was the trigger.

- If the trigger is a food, you must learn to read food labels carefully. When ordering foods at restaurants or eating in friends' homes, ask about ingredients. Be aware of ingredients that may contain triggers. Avoid eating foods if you can't confirm their ingredients. If your reactions are severe, contact the manufacturer to assure that the triggering food was not processed in the same area as a food to which you are allergic.
- If the trigger is a drug, inform all health care providers of the reaction. Be prepared to report what happened when you had the reaction. Wear a tag (necklace or bracelet) that identifies the allergy.
- Insect stings are more difficult to avoid. Wear long-sleeved clothing outdoors. Avoid bright colors and perfumes that attract stinging insects. Use caution with sweetened beverages outdoors, such as uncovered soft drinks.

## **Rules To Remember!**

1. Never take Severe Allergies Lightly!
2. The first signs of a reaction should be taken seriously!
3. Follow school policy/guidelines for treats in school.
4. Ask what your friends are allergic to and help them avoid it.
5. Respect others medical conditions and their special needs.
6. Get help if a friend has an allergic reaction.
7. Do not wait to see how serious the reaction may become: call for help immediately!

