



THE ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL

Allergy In Schools

What is Allergy/Anaphylaxis?

Allergy happens when the body becomes abnormally sensitive to a substance that is normally harmless, such as a particular food.

Allergy is related to the immune system. Normally, the immune system fights harmful things, such as disease. But an allergic person's body believes that, just like a disease, this food or other substance poses a danger.

When an allergic person is exposed to the substance, his or her immune system does all it can to fight it, causing the physical symptoms of an allergic reaction. Unfortunately, this well-meaning reaction by the immune system can often do a lot of harm. The most severe type of allergic reaction is called anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is at the extreme end of the allergic spectrum and may be fatal if not treated quickly with adrenaline. The whole body is affected, often within minutes of exposure to the allergen but sometimes after hours.

What Are The Symptoms?

Allergic reactions vary in severity. Mild or moderate symptoms may include itching or swelling in the mouth, hives anywhere on the body, generalised flushing of the skin or nausea or vomiting.

Serious symptoms include a severe drop in blood pressure (where you go weak and floppy): severe asthma; or a closing of the throat.

Symptoms usually occur after seconds or minutes, and may progress rapidly. Occasionally they begin a few hours after contact with the allergic food or substance.

ANAPHYLAXIS is a very severe form of allergic reaction, which affects the whole body, sometimes within minutes. During an anaphylactic reaction, many chemicals are released from the cells and cause swelling in the mouth and/or on the skin. Swelling in the throat can restrict the breathing, which can prove fatal. Symptoms of anaphylaxis include:

- Generalised flushing of the skin
- Nettle rash (hives) anywhere on the body
- Sense of impending doom
- Swelling of the throat and mouth
- Difficulty in swallowing or speaking
- Alterations in heart rate
- Severe asthma
- Abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting
- Sudden feeling of weakness (drop in blood pressure)
- Collapse and unconsciousness



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Not everybody would necessarily experience all these symptoms.

What Is The Treatment And How Does It Work?

Treatment for a mild reaction, (rash, hives, mild swelling), is the administration of antihistamines. Here at school we give Piriton. This will also be found with the epipens with instructions.

Adrenaline is the front-line treatment for anaphylaxis.

During anaphylaxis, blood vessels leak, bronchial tissues swell and blood pressure drops, causing choking and collapse. Adrenaline acts quickly to constrict the blood vessels, relax smooth muscle in the lungs to improve breathing, stimulate the heartbeat and help stop swelling around the face and lips.

What To Do In An Emergency

School staff need to know what to do in an emergency - how to recognise an allergic reaction, and what to do if it happens.

Mild Symptoms

If the symptoms are mild - such as an itching or tingling in the mouth, or on the body - then they may be treated with an antihistamine. But occasionally it can get worse quite rapidly so the staff will have to keep a watchful eye on the child for the possibility of a severe reaction developing.

Recognising a serious reaction

- Is there a marked difficulty in breathing or swallowing?
- Is there a sudden weakness or floppiness?
- Is there a steady deterioration?

Any of these are serious. Adrenaline should be administered via the Epipen as soon as possible and an ambulance called. The used pen must be given to the ambulance crew.

Treatment

If there is any doubt whatsoever, it's better to play safe and administer adrenaline.

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This document will be revised in line with changes in best practice and legislation. These changes will be notified to all concerned. Questions or comments should be directed to the appropriate member of the Senior Management Team.