



Anaphylaxis and Child Care Services

What are allergies?

An allergy is when the immune system reacts to substances (allergens) in the environment which are usually harmless (e.g. food proteins, pollen, dust mites).

What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe, often rapidly progressive allergic reaction that is potentially life threatening.

What causes anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is most commonly caused by food allergies. Any food can cause an allergic reaction, however nine foods cause 90% of reactions in Australia, these are:

- peanuts
- tree nuts (e.g. hazelnuts, cashews, almonds)
- egg
- cow's milk
- wheat
- soybean
- fish
- shellfish
- sesame.

Other causes of anaphylaxis include:

- insect stings and bites
- medications
- latex.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Mild to moderate allergic reaction

- swelling of lips, face, eyes
- hives or welts
- tingling mouth
- abdominal pain, vomiting (these are signs of a severe allergic reaction to insects).

Anaphylaxis (Severe Allergic Reaction)

- difficult/noisy breathing
- swelling of tongue
- swelling/tightness in throat
- difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
- wheeze or persistent cough
- persistent dizziness or collapse
- pale and floppy (young children).

Why is it important to know about anaphylaxis?

Avoidance of known allergens is crucial in the management of anaphylaxis. Child care services need to work with parents/guardians and children to minimise a child's exposure to known allergens. Knowledge of severe allergies will assist staff to better understand how to help children who are at risk of anaphylaxis.

How can anaphylaxis be treated?

Adrenaline given as an injection using an autoinjector (such as an EpiPen® or Anapen®) into the outer mid thigh muscle is the most effective first aid treatment for anaphylaxis. Adrenaline autoinjectors are designed so that anyone can use them in an emergency.

Parents/guardians should provide child care services with an adrenaline autoinjector and ASCIA Action Plan for their child, which should be stored unlocked and easily accessible to staff. If a child is treated with an adrenaline autoinjector, an ambulance must be called immediately to take the child to a hospital.

How can anaphylaxis be prevented?

The key to the prevention of anaphylaxis is:

- knowledge of children who are at risk,
- awareness of known allergens, and
- prevention of exposure to known allergens.

Some children wear a medical warning bracelet to indicate allergies.

7 Steps to 'allergy awareness' in child care services

1 **Understand roles and responsibilities**
Parents/guardians and staff have important and differing roles and responsibilities in managing anaphylaxis in child care services. These responsibilities need to be identified and communicated.

2 **Determine what allergies you need to manage**
It is important to obtain medical information from parents/guardians about allergies and the risk of anaphylaxis. This information can be recorded using an Individual Anaphylaxis Health Care Plan.

3 **Assess the risk of allergen exposure**
It is important to assess the likelihood of exposure to known allergens.

4 **Minimise the risk of exposure**
There are a range of practical strategies that child care services can implement to minimise the risk. Strategies implemented by the service should be determined by what allergies the service needs to manage. Child care services may like to develop a policy specific to their local service and community.

5 **Train staff and plan emergency response**
Staff need to know how to recognise, treat and prevent anaphylaxis, where medications are stored and emergency response procedures to effectively manage anaphylaxis.

6 **Communicate with the child care service community**
Communicating with staff, parents/guardians and children is essential in successfully managing anaphylaxis in child care services.

7 **Review and assess management strategies**
Policies, procedures and strategies need to be reviewed each year as well as after a child has experienced a severe reaction while in the child care service's care.

Further information:

WA Department of Health
www.health.wa.gov.au/anaphylaxis

Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)
www.allergy.org.au

Anaphylaxis Australia Inc
www.allergyfacts.org.au



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