

Allergy Awareness Policy

Background Information

There has been an increase in enrolments in kindergartens in S.A. over the last few years of children with severe allergies. Meadows and Districts Kindergarten is now an allergy aware site. This is to reduce the risk of reaction for children with allergies and to ensure a safe environment at Kindergarten for all children. The policy also aims to promote awareness amongst children and parents/ caregivers about allergic reactions suffered by certain children after coming into contact with these products. It aims to alert parents to the potential severity of "ANAPHYLACTIC" reactions and to provide information about how parents can help prevent such reactions by being aware of which products to avoid.

Many children have allergies. If exposed, allergic reactions include hives, swollen eyes, wheezing and asthma symptoms. Some reactions however **are life threatening**. Some children are severely allergic to certain foods and even a tiny amount could be fatal within minutes. Children who have severe allergies to food substances are exposed to a health risk not only when those foods are consumed but from residue left on toys, play surfaces and other equipment. These children are termed **anaphylactic**. The most common food allergens are peanuts, tree nuts[cashews, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, almonds, pecans], cows milk and other dairy products and eggs. Nutella and chocolate spread are high risk for children with nut allergies. Other allergies may be related to the environment e.g. bee stings.

Anaphylaxis is the most severe form of allergic reaction and can result in death. It is a critical medical emergency that requires immediate treatment with adrenalin by injection to prevent permanent injury or loss of life. (Adrenalin opens up airways and blood vessels in the body).

Implementation

To ensure that anaphylactic children are safe at our kindergarten the following strategies will be implemented:

1. All staff are allergy aware and together provide an environment that will minimize the risk of exposure to identified allergens.
2. All new staff and relief staff are made aware of anaphylactic children at the site and are instructed on what actions are to be taken in the event of an anaphylactic emergency. Relievers also need to be aware of the food and product restrictions they need to abide to.
3. Our kindergarten must be informed of all allergies, if any, upon enrolment of a child. We must be provided with an Action Plan written and signed by the child's medical practitioner, using the proforma provided by the child's doctor as soon as possible.
4. Our kindergarten must be notified immediately of any changes to the child's condition that may affect their existing care.
5. Any suspicions of allergies that parents/caregivers have noted on enrolment should be further investigated by a qualified practitioner.
6. Parents/ caregivers of an anaphylactic child must make sure the appropriate medication is made available to the Kindergarten for use in the event of an emergency. All medication must have clear instructions on a pharmacy label and be stored in a secure, safe place. All staff must know of this location in the event of an emergency.

7. In the event that accidental exposure may occur there is an emergency response procedure in place as outlined in the child's Action Plan and this will be followed by staff.
8. An Anaphylactic child with a food allergy will be encouraged by his/her family and kindergarten staff not to accept food from anyone other than their own family.
9. Nut allergies are common in young children. For this reason, we ask for parent's understanding and co-operation by not sending any snacks and lunches that contain **nuts or nut products** or state "This product may **contain** traces of nuts". It is simply a matter of double checking labels before packing lunch.
10. All children will be encouraged not to share food with each other and will sit down when eating. Children's lunches and snacks are to be monitored by staff members supervising at lunch time in order to assess potential risk and to educate the children on the necessity of eating "allergy aware foods".
11. In the event that a child brings a snack containing a known allergen, the snack will be put aside in a container in the kitchen and the child will be asked to take the snack home at the end of the day. An allergen free alternative will be offered to children. Staff will place a reminder note in their lunch box for their parent/guardian that we are an allergy aware kindergarten.
12. Kindergarten staff will supervise children who have anaphylaxis closely whilst they are eating their snacks or lunches.
13. Cooking experiences will always be allergy aware.
14. From time to time, the Kindergarten staff will remind parents/ caregivers and the children of the policy, via newsletters, posters, notes etc.
15. All staff will be trained in the use of an EpiPen as per DECD regulations.
16. Occasional Care and Playgroup will also adhere to this policy so as to reduce the risk of contamination to any play equipment they may use.
17. Materials sent in to the Centre for use in craft activities must not be used if they have contained products that an anaphylactic child at our kindergarten is allergic today e.g. no egg cartons for egg allergies
18. These strategies will apply to anaphylactic staff members also.

References:

Anaphylaxis in Education and Children's Services – Planning and Support Guide 2012 – DECD website