

Allergies



Allergies are the body's overreaction to substances that, in non-allergic people, are harmless. These substances called allergens can enter the body through the skin, eyes, nose, mouth or digestive system. Common allergens include dust, moulds, pollen, insect bites, animals (including dander, hair, fur, feathers and saliva), chemical vapours from paint, carpet or perfume, foods and smoke. Allergy symptoms may be mild, moderate or severe. Even mild symptoms, if chronic, can cause students to be absent from or have difficulty in school. However, allergies can be controlled and symptoms can be managed.

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that causes rapid, life-threatening effects throughout the body and typically requires immediate medical attention. It is important to know your jurisdiction's protocol in relation to this serious medical condition.

Implications for Planning and Awareness

- Meet with the student and parents early in the school year to discuss how the school can support this student's needs related to allergies. This could include finding out about:
 - the student's strengths, interests and areas of need
 - the student's specific symptoms
 - common triggers that need to be considered at school
 - successful strategies used at home or in the community that also could be used at school.
- In collaboration with parents and health care professionals, develop a written management plan that aligns with related jurisdictional policies and protocols and could include specific information, such as:
 - the role of school staff
 - when and what emergency measures should be taken.
- If the student is taking medication during the school day, discuss with the parents possible side effects. Follow school and/or jurisdictional policies and protocols in storing and administering medication.
- Work with the parents to carry out a risk assessment before field trips to determine potential hazards and to plan for the student's safe and successful participation.
- Collaborate with the parents and student to consider if, and how, they would like to share specific information about allergies with peers. If they wish to do this, consultation with health care providers, such as school or community health nurses, may be helpful.

Your awareness needs to begin with conversations with the student's parents.



- Learn as much as you can about how allergies may affect learning and social and emotional well-being. Reading, asking questions and talking to qualified professionals will build your understanding and help you make decisions to support the student's success at school.
- Develop a system for sharing information with relevant staff members about the student's allergies and successful strategies.

Implications for Instruction

- Identify and take steps to reduce common allergy triggers in the school environment.
- Be aware that students with severe allergies may have numerous absences due to medical appointments or treatments, or fatigue.
- Develop a communication strategy between the home and school to stay informed about absences, and to keep the student and family connected to classroom learning.
- Recognize that a student, who has been ill with allergies or has recently had an allergic episode, may need some time to work up to speed again. Adjust the workload, if needed, and provide appropriate academic and social supports.

Implications for Social and Emotional Well-being

- Engage the student and parents in planning for transitions between grade levels and different schools.
- Support the development of self-advocacy skills, such as teaching the students to ask for what they need. When possible, involve students in monitoring the success of supports and strategies used in the classroom.
- Consider a buddy system to support a student with allergies. If the student is returning to class after an allergic reaction, the buddy can help out with missed work.
- If required, make necessary adjustments to social activities to allow students with allergies to participate safely.
- Listen to students. Respond quickly if a student identifies the beginnings of an allergic reaction.
- Recognize that the student may have dietary restrictions. Help the student feel included in the classroom by considering this when foods are served for special events or brought into the classroom.

Parents know their children well and can offer insights on how to support their social and emotional well-being. There is strength in collaborating on strategies that could be used at home, at school and in the community.



As you consider the implications for this medical condition, think about the following questions:

1. Do I need further conversations with the parents to better understand this student's medical needs? Yes No
2. Do I need targeted professional learning?
If yes, what specific topics and strategies would I explore? Yes No
3. Is consultation with jurisdictional staff required?
If yes, what issues and questions would we explore? Yes No
4. Is consultation with external service providers required (e.g., Student Health Partnership, Alberta Children's Hospital, Glenrose Hospital, Stollery Children's Hospital)?
If yes, what issues and questions would we explore? Yes No

Links for further information:

Food Allergy Canada. <https://foodallergycanada.ca/>
Students with medical needs. <https://www.alberta.ca/students-with-medical-needs.aspx>
Allergy Aware. <https://www.allergyaware.ca/>

Please note:

These websites are for information only and the user is responsible for evaluating the content and appropriate uses of the information.

