

## Anaphylaxis Overview

Anaphylaxis (pronounced “an-a-fi-LAX-is”) is a life-threatening allergic reaction that can happen when someone comes into contact with a food or other trigger to which they are allergic. Avoidance of allergic triggers is the critical first step in managing potentially life-threatening (severe) allergies.

Anaphylaxis is a growing public health problem that may affect millions of Americans. There has been an increase in life-threatening allergic reactions in recent years and more research is underway.

In addition to those who have experienced anaphylaxis, there may be others who are not aware and could also be at risk for a life-threatening allergic reaction. And since a life-threatening allergic reaction can happen anywhere at school, it's important to be ready in case one does occur.

## Allergic Triggers

Triggers are things that might cause an allergic reaction. For some students at school, a life-threatening allergic reaction can be triggered by something as simple as eating a friend's snack with unknown ingredients or being stung by a bee during recess. The most common causes of anaphylaxis are certain foods, insect stings, some medications, latex or a trigger of unknown origin.

Food allergies are the most common cause of anaphylaxis and are a growing health problem. A 2011 study found that 8% of children in the U.S. — an estimated 1 out of 13 — suffer from a food allergy. Of those children affected, 38% had a history of a severe reaction, and 30% had allergies to multiple foods. Virtually any food can cause a life-threatening allergic reaction.

The most common foods to cause anaphylaxis, which account for 90% of all food allergy reactions in the U.S., include:

- ★ Cow's milk
- ★ Eggs
- ★ Peanuts
- ★ Tree nuts (e.g., walnuts, cashews, pistachios, pecans)
- ★ Fish
- ★ Shellfish
- ★ Soybeans
- ★ Wheat

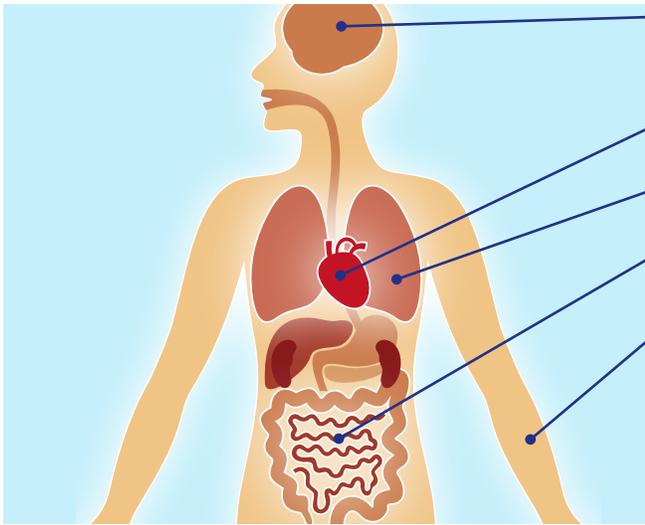
## Anaphylaxis Management

Food allergy guidelines released by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, a division of the National Institutes of Health, state that epinephrine is the medicine a person experiencing anaphylaxis should receive. If experiencing anaphylaxis, find an adult who can help. Administer epinephrine and seek emergency medical attention immediately.

Epinephrine, also known as adrenaline, is a naturally occurring hormone. It works to relieve life-threatening symptoms that occur during anaphylaxis. It is important to know that antihistamines and corticosteroids are not indicated (or intended) to treat anaphylaxis. Please consult your healthcare professional about the treatment plan that's right for you.

## Anaphylaxis Signs and Symptoms

A life-threatening allergic reaction can make someone feel sick in many different ways, such as:



**Central nervous system:** Dizziness, headaches, confusion

**Cardiovascular system:** Chest pain, weak pulse, dizziness, fainting

**Airway:** Trouble breathing, chest tightness, itchy throat

**Gastrointestinal system:** Nausea, stomach pain

**Skin:** Rash/hives, itching, swelling of the lips and/or tongue

These are not all of the symptoms associated with a life-threatening allergic reaction. Please talk to your doctor for a complete list of symptoms. If a person is having a life-threatening allergic reaction, they should administer epinephrine and seek immediate medical attention (e.g., calling 911 or another emergency medical service).

## Anaphylaxis in Schools

Schools nationwide have worked hard to reduce exposure to allergens in the school environment – a critical first step in managing severe allergies. However, allergens aren't always obvious, so the risk of anaphylaxis remains.

Anaphylaxis can be triggered with little to no warning. In addition to those who have experienced anaphylaxis, there may be others who have been determined to be at risk for a life-threatening allergic reaction. There are life-threatening allergic emergencies in school each year, despite everyone's best efforts and attempts to avoid allergens. This is why everyone in the school community, from teachers to students, nurses and administrators, should know the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis, be able to recognize the triggers and be ready to respond when it occurs.

### Top Tips for Managing Anaphylaxis in Schools

- ★ Know and avoid allergic triggers
- ★ Understand and recognize signs and symptoms
- ★ Respond when anaphylaxis occurs and tell an adult
- ★ Seek emergency care

Check out [www.Anaphylaxis101.com](http://www.Anaphylaxis101.com) for more information.