



Managing Food Allergies in Schools

The Role of School Transportation Staff



Overview

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published *Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs*, (www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies/) to help schools manage the risk of food allergies and severe allergic reactions in students. As school bus drivers and transportation staff, you can help keep students with food allergies stay safe while riding school buses.



Did you know?

- A food allergy is an adverse reaction that occurs soon after exposure to a certain food.
- Food allergy reactions can be very serious and even cause death.



In a typical bus of 25 students, at least one student is likely to have food allergies.^{1,2}



What can you do?

✓ Get trained and help manage food allergies on the school bus.

- Participate in training to learn about food allergies and how to respond in an emergency.
- Ask the school nurse or administrator for information on school policies for students with food allergies.
- Know which students have food allergies and review the emergency care plans for these students.
- Learn how to respond to an allergic reaction if it occurs during transportation.
- Share emergency care plans and responsibilities with substitute bus drivers and other adult attendants who assist students on the school bus.

✓ Prepare for and respond to food allergy emergencies.

- If you suspect a severe food allergy reaction, or anaphylaxis, take immediate action:
 - ◆ Safely pull the bus over and stop the bus.
 - ◆ Call 911 or the emergency medical system (EMS) to ask for emergency transportation of any student showing signs of anaphylaxis.
 - ◆ Know the location of emergency medication and be ready to administer an epinephrine auto-injector if you are a delegated and trained staff member.^{3,4}
 - ◆ Let the school administrator know your actions and the need for someone to contact the student's parents.

✓ Support a healthy and safe school transportation environment.

- Ensure that two-way communication systems between schools and school buses are working properly.
- Enforce district food policies for all students riding a school bus. Rules that prohibit eating and drinking on school buses help to protect students from food allergy reactions while riding the bus.
- Do not give food or candy to students.
- Follow district cleaning procedures for bus surfaces, such as seats and handrails. This will help decrease the possibility of cross contact with allergens.
- Encourage students to treat each other with kindness and respect.
- Report all cases of bullying to parents and the school administrator.

Learn to recognize food allergy symptoms

Food allergy symptoms can include

- swollen lips, tongue, or eyes;
- itchiness, rash, or hives;
- nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea;
- congestion, hoarse voice, or trouble swallowing;
- wheezing or difficulty breathing;
- dizziness, fainting, or loss of consciousness;
- and mood change or confusion.

“Anaphylaxis” is a severe allergic reaction that starts rapidly and may cause death.^{3,4}

Children with food allergies might say it in the following ways:

- It feels like something is poking my tongue.
- My tongue (or mouth) is tingling (or burning).
- My tongue (or mouth) itches.
- My tongue feels like there is hair on it.
- My mouth feels funny.
- There's a frog in my throat; there's something stuck in my throat.
- My tongue feels full (or heavy).
- My lips feel tight.
- It feels like there are bugs in there (to describe itchy ears).
- It (my throat) feels thick.
- It feels like a bump is on the back of my tongue or throat.⁵



Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs. 2013. Available at: www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies/

National School Transportation Specifications & Procedures. Adopted by the Fifteenth National Congress on School Transportation; 2013. Available at <http://ncstonline.org/>



References

1. Branum AM, Lukacs SL. Food allergy among US children: trends in prevalence and hospitalizations. *NCHS Data Brief*. 2008;10:1-8.
2. Liu AH, Jaramillo R, Sicherer SH, et al. National prevalence and risk factors for food allergy and relationship to asthma: results from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2005-2006. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2010;126(4):798-806.e13.
3. Nowak-Wegrzyn A, Conover-Walker MK, Wood RA. Food-allergic reactions in schools and preschools. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*. 2001;155(7):790-795.
4. McIntyre CL, Sheetz AH, Carroll CR, Young MC. Administration of epinephrine for life-threatening allergic reactions in school settings. *Pediatrics*. 2005;116(5):1134-1140.
5. The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network. *Food Allergy News*. 2003;13(2).

