

Managing severe allergies

June 2011

Chesterfield County Public Schools and Chesterfield County Health Department School Health Services

Providing a safe, supportive and nurturing environment is a goal of Chesterfield County Public Schools. This includes preventing and managing severe allergic reactions so that all students can fully and safely participate in school activities.

Allergic reactions are an immune-system hypersensitivity to a particular substance called an allergen. For many allergic individuals, exposure to an allergen results in mild symptoms. But for some people, allergic reactions can be life threatening. The most dangerous symptoms include difficulty breathing and a drop in blood pressure, which are potentially fatal. Called anaphylaxis, this severe and lightning-fast allergic reaction may affect students with known allergies and those without known allergies.

Between 1 percent and 2 percent of people are at risk for anaphylaxis from food and stinging insects. The most common allergens, accounting for 90 percent of allergic reactions, are milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat and soy, according to the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network.

Fewer people are at risk from drugs, latex, chemical or environmental allergens, such as perfume or scented lotion, but these can also cause life-threatening reactions, so it is important to follow the school system's environmental health procedures.

Because it is difficult to predict the time or severity of an allergic reaction, it is vital to be prepared to respond rapidly in order to maintain a safe educational environment for all students. Supporting the success of a student with a severe allergy requires a team approach and a coordinated plan, so that all team members understand their roles. Team members include the parent/guardian, student, school staff members, health-care provider, public health nurse and community.

A component of school emergency response plans, these severe allergy guidelines outline the roles of individuals responsible for the health and well-being of students with severe allergies, supporting inclusion of all students in school activities. This document is designed to be flexible and to change over time. Recognizing that it is not possible to eliminate every potential allergy exposure, these guidelines also encourage age-appropriate student education and self-advocacy.

Wondering about privacy? The Family Educational and Privacy Rights Act allows information to be shared with school employees to maintain students' health and safety.

Helpful phone numbers

Chesterfield County Public Schools ► 748-1405

Chesterfield County Health Department School Health Services ► 748-1633

Transportation Department of Chesterfield County Public Schools ► 748-1656

Nutritionist for Chesterfield County Public Schools ► 743-3728

Environmental Health and Safety for Chesterfield County Public Schools ► 318-8048

Parent-Teacher Resource Center for Chesterfield County Public Schools ► 279-7311



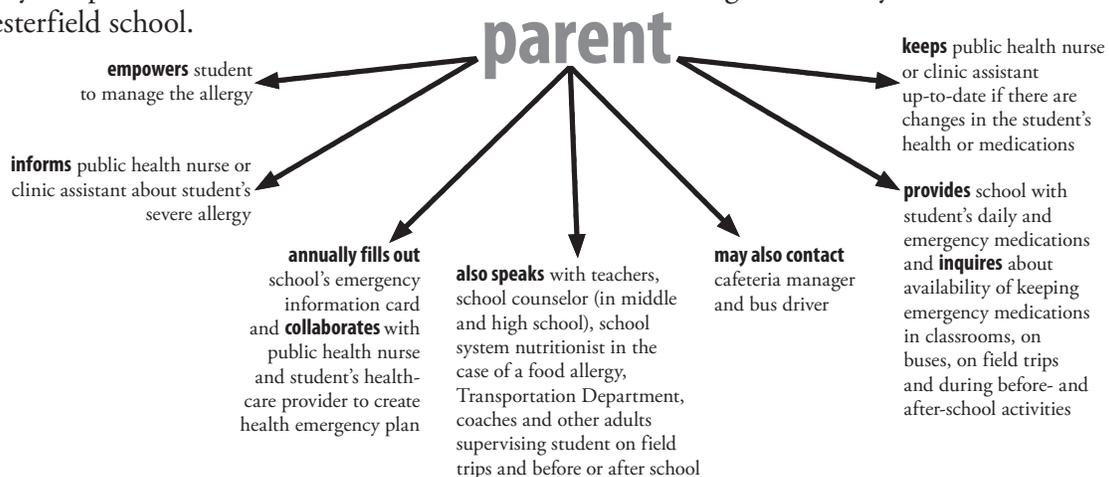
Chesterfield County Public Schools ★ chesterfield.k12.va.us ★ P.O. Box 10, Chesterfield, VA 23832

Chesterfield County Public Schools does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, age, religion, disability or national origin in employment or in its educational programs and activities.

Responsibilities of parents/guardians

It starts with the parent. Parents/guardians of a student with a severe allergy are key to the process of keeping their child safe at school. They are at the center of developing a plan that works for their child.

- Empower the student to manage his/her allergy, making sure he/she is knowledgeable about
 - allergens.
 - first symptoms of allergic/anaphylactic reaction.
 - the importance of hand washing before and after eating.
 - strategies for avoiding exposure to the allergen (including not sharing or trading food, if allergen is a specific food).
 - how and when to tell an adult that he/she may be having an allergy-related problem.
 - self-administration of medication, if ordered by student's health-care provider.
- Promptly complete Chesterfield County Public Schools emergency information card **annually**.
- Collaborate with the public health nurse and student's health-care provider to create a health emergency plan for the student. Using guidelines from the public health nurse, talk with the student's health-care provider to make sure all appropriate measures are in place.
- If you suspect your child may have a disability, ask your child's teacher, counselor or administrator for a referral to consider eligibility for 504 or special education services.
- Contact **annually** about the student's severe allergy
 - student's teachers.
 - student's school counselor in middle and high school.
 - the school system's nutritionist, providing physician documentation of food allergies. When student eats school breakfasts or lunches, use the cafeteria's online payment system because it lessens the chances of the student buying food he/she is allergic to.
 - school system's Transportation Department.
 - coaches and other adults supervising the student on field trips and during before- or after-school activities.
- May also speak with cafeteria manager and bus driver.
- Provide the school with all daily and emergency medications prescribed by the student's health-care provider, following school system medication administration policies. Keep medications up to date.
- Inquire about the availability of keeping emergency medications in classrooms, on school buses, on field trips and during before- and after-school activities.
- Communicate any changes in the student's health or medications to principal, public health nurse, clinic assistant, teacher and other staff members.
- Notify the public health nurse if the student will transfer during the school year to another Chesterfield school.



Responsibilities of student

The goal for the student is to be empowered to manage his/her severe allergy, based on the student's developmental level. The severe allergy management process is directed toward the student's well-being and safety.

- Be proactive in the care and self-management of severe allergies and reactions, based on developmental level.
- Take responsibility by
 - not trading or sharing food.
 - not eating foods with unknown ingredients or known to contain any allergen.
 - being aware of allergen exposure risks (bus, cafeteria, school playground, latex).
 - washing hands before and after eating.
- Immediately notify an adult as soon as exposure or symptoms occur. Students should be prepared to advocate for themselves if necessary.
- If authorized to self-administer emergency medication, initiate treatment and immediately notify an adult.
- Notify an adult of any unkindness related to the severe allergy.

Responsibilities of principal

Principals are concerned with the health and safety of all students and staff members in their school, including students with severe allergies.

- Oversee the school's support system for students with severe allergies and other medical conditions, making sure it is operating as intended.
- As part of the school's emergency response plan, make sure the correct number of staff members are certified in CPR and first aid and maintain a list of students with severe allergies or other critical health conditions.
- Identify at least two staff members for training in administering emergency medication (for example, epinephrine or antihistamine) on field trips. A trained staff member must go on field trips that include a student with a severe allergy.
- Make sure that teachers, staff members and all school system employees in your building know which staff members are certified in CPR and first aid and which staff members are trained in administering emergency medicine.
- Provide time **annually** for the public health nurse to provide general allergy awareness information to all staff members.
- Notify the public health nurse or clinic assistant if parents tell you that their child has a severe allergy.
- Follow the student's health emergency plan.
- Provide for the investigation of incidents of unkindness directed at students with severe allergies.

Responsibilities of public health nurse

The Chesterfield Health Department provides public health nursing services in schools to protect, preserve and promote optimum health in school communities. Each public health nurse is a registered nurse who works collaboratively with principals, staff members, clinic assistants, students and families by providing case management, health assessment, training and education, referrals and other services.

- Provide general allergy awareness information to all school staff members **annually**.
- Collaborate with parent/guardian and student's health-care provider to develop a health emergency plan. This includes identifying staff members who need to know about the student's severe allergy.
- Serve as case manager for students with severe allergies, offering principal, teachers, clinic assistant, school counselor, Transportation Department, custodial staff members and other staff members the information and training to keep students safe. This includes providing a list of students with severe food allergies to the cafeteria manager.
- Develop health alert communications outlining daily management and emergency assistance, based on the health emergency plan. Share health alerts with the principal, teachers, clinic assistant, school counselor and other staff members as appropriate. Communicate to staff members their specific roles and responsibilities in severe allergy management.
- Train designated staff members in daily management of the student's severe allergy.
- Train designated staff members in administering emergency medication (for example, epinephrine or antihistamine) on field trips and during daily activities.
- Review with the student how to self-manage and prevent severe allergic reactions.
- Follow the student's health emergency plan.
- Notify the public health nurse if you know that a student with severe allergies will transfer during the school year to another Chesterfield school. Each spring, send a list of rising sixth-graders or rising ninth-graders with severe allergies to the public health nurse at the middle or high school they will attend.
- Consider leading a discussion and support group for students with severe allergies.

Responsibilities of clinic assistant

The clinic assistant works closely with the public health nurse, parent, student and staff members to provide care to the student during the school day.

- Participate in general allergy awareness information session conducted **annually** by the public health nurse for all school staff members.
- Participate in **annual** training for medication administration.
- Notify the public health nurse if parents tell you that their child has a severe allergy.
- Collaborate with the public health nurse.
- Provide daily management and emergency assistance according to the health emergency plan and health alerts.
- Prepare emergency medication for field trips.
- Notify parent when medication refills are needed.
- Notify parent of any expiring medication before the expiration date.
- Follow the student's health emergency plan.
- Know which staff members in your school are certified in CPR and first aid and which staff members are trained in administering emergency medicine.

Responsibilities of teacher

Having daily contact with the student, the teacher is an integral member of the severe allergy management team. The teacher is often the first to witness the signs of a severe allergic reaction and needs to respond appropriately for the student's safety.

- Review every student's cumulative file before the school year begins. If there is documentation of a severe allergy, communicate with the public health nurse or clinic assistant.
- Notify the public health nurse or clinic assistant if parents tell you that their child has a severe allergy.
- Participate in general allergy awareness information session conducted **annually** by the public health nurse for all school staff members.
- Know the details of the student's health emergency plan and follow it. Review health alerts from the public health nurse.
- Provide for substitute teachers specific, easy-to-read information about students with severe allergies.
- Before a field trip
 - take with you copies of all emergency information cards and health emergency plans.
 - send a list of participating students to clinic assistant so that emergency medication can be prepared.
 - consider receiving emergency medication administration training from public health nurse. A trained staff member must go on field trips that include a student with a severe allergy.
 - clarify management and emergency assistance needs of student with public health nurse.
- Know which staff members in your school are certified in CPR and first aid and which staff members are trained in administering emergency medicine.
- Collaborate with other school staff members and volunteers to
 - discourage using food or other potential allergens for rewards or teaching purposes in the classroom.
 - use non-latex items (for example, balloons, gloves, tape) if a student is identified with a severe latex allergy.
 - discourage food sharing among students.
 - provide appropriate seating in the cafeteria.
 - teach proper hand washing.
 - inform administration of need for supplemental cleaning of classroom.
- Notify cafeteria monitor and playground monitor of students identified with severe allergies.

Responsibilities of school counselor

In middle and high schools, school counselors serve as a central contact for parents and teachers. Middle and high school students are more independent than elementary students and more adept at managing their severe allergies.

- Ask parents who are enrolling students about severe allergies and notify the public health nurse or clinic assistant if parents tell you their child has a severe allergy.
- Participate in general allergy awareness information session conducted **annually** by the public health nurse for all school staff members.
- Follow the student's health emergency plan.

Responsibilities of elementary school office staff members

In elementary schools, office staff members serve as a central contact for parents.

- Ask parents who are enrolling students about severe allergies and notify the public health nurse or clinic assistant if parents tell you their child has a severe allergy.
- Annually**, put the one-page handout for parents titled “It starts with the parent — managing severe allergies in Chesterfield County Public Schools” in the information packets that every student takes home on the first day of school.
- Participate in general allergy awareness information session conducted **annually** by the public health nurse for all school staff members.
- Follow the student’s health emergency plan.

Responsibilities of nutritionist

The nutritionist for Chesterfield County Public Schools will communicate with the cafeteria manager and the public health nurse about students who have severe **food** allergies.

- Provide severe allergy awareness education to cafeteria managers.
- Work closely with parents whose students eat school breakfasts or lunches.
- Work with cafeteria managers on
 - following safe food handling, cleaning and sanitation practices to avoid cross-contamination with potential allergens.
 - making reasonable substitutions according to federal guidelines and Food and Nutrition Services procedures.
 - entering student food allergy information into Food and Nutrition Services database, based on information from school staff members and parent.
- Provide ingredient information upon request, along with the nutrition facts and ingredient lists publication.

Responsibilities of Transportation Department

The Transportation Department is divided into district operations areas. When a parent communicates about a student’s severe allergy to the Transportation Department’s assistant director or to the office manager of the designated operations area, the assistant director or office manager will share that information with the bus drivers and substitute bus drivers.

- Follow school system emergency protocols.
- Coordinate allergy awareness education and training on emergency medication administration for school bus drivers as needed.
- Allow special seating arrangements if needed.
- Prohibit eating and drinking on the bus, unless it is necessary for a student’s health.
- Adhere to school system environmental procedures in the bus.