

## ANAPHYLAXIS

Dear Parents and Carers

The peak body ASCIA (Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy) defines anaphylaxis as a potentially **life threatening**, severe allergic reaction that should always be treated as a medical emergency. Anaphylaxis occurs after exposure to an allergen (usually to foods, insects or medicines), to which a person is allergic. Not all people with allergies are at risk of anaphylaxis.

As of this year we have students enrolled at Bankstown West who have a diagnosis of anaphylaxis. For this reason we **must** change some of our practices and procedures. Part of this involves educating all children and parents in the seriousness of this condition. Once we understand that death is a potential consequence we can do nothing less than wholeheartedly support these families, as is the Bankstown West way.

Symptoms of anaphylaxis are potentially life threatening and include any one of the following:

- Difficult/noisy breathing
- Swelling of tongue
- Swelling/tightness in throat
- Difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
- Wheeze or persistent cough
- Persistent dizziness and/or collapse
- Pale and floppy (in young children)

If children notice these signs in their friends they would behave responsibly if they reported it to a teacher immediately.

Adrenaline is the first line treatment for anaphylaxis. While it works rapidly to reverse the effects of anaphylaxis (and all staff have been trained in its use), it is infinitely better to **avoid the triggers to begin with** as there is a very short window in which it can be administered. With food allergies, avoidance of the food is the only way to avoid an allergic reaction. Unfortunately this doesn't just mean the child with anaphylaxis should not eat certain foods – even coming into contact with traces can be enough to cause a reaction. For example, let's say a child has a Nutella sandwich but doesn't wash his hands thoroughly enough before touching an iPad, if the child with anaphylaxis picks up the iPad there can be cross contamination. Or it could just as easily be a handrail that is touched, a library book, a tap or bubbler...

For this reason we have removed some items from the school canteen (e.g. zaatar) and we have asked **parents to please stop sending to school lunches that include zaatar, peanut butter and Nutella**. And when children understand they are eating these foods for afternoon tea when they are at home rather than at school so that they are helping keep others safe, they are displaying respect and responsibility. Please discuss this with your children to reinforce the message we are giving at school.

It is easy for parents of a child with anaphylaxis to do all in their power to keep him or her safe. What makes us responsible members of our school community is our commitment to **keep all children safe**, even the ones we don't know personally.

I thank you for your understanding and commitment.

Felicity Bonello  
Principal