

Basic Information Regarding Food Allergies

Food allergies continue to present challenges for schools. Due to the increasing prevalence and the life-threatening nature of these allergies, schools and families need to be armed with the right information to help the students with food allergies. Forty to fifty percent of those persons with a diagnosed food allergy are judged to have a high risk of anaphylaxis.

- **Eight foods account for 90% of total food allergies. They are peanut, tree nut, milk, egg, soy, wheat, fish, and shellfish.**
- **Peanut and tree nuts account for 92% of severe and fatal reactions, along with fish and shellfish.**
- **The student with an undiagnosed food allergy may experience his/her first food allergy reaction at school.**

Some symptoms of anaphylaxis include but are not limited to shortness of breath, coughing, swelling around eyes and mouth, hives, itching, and vomiting. Some students require an emergency medication called epinephrine to treat anaphylaxis or suspected reaction to an allergen. School personnel are trained in providing such emergency medication.

Areas in school that pose a potential hazard for a child with a food allergy include cross contamination on desks, tables ; in the cafeteria; craft, art and science projects; bus transportation; field trips; hidden ingredients; fundraisers; bake sales; parties and holiday celebrations.

Areas in which parents of all students can help schools protect students with food allergies include the following:

- **Follow the guidelines that each individual teacher may require for their classroom**
- **Instruct all students that sharing of food is not allowed**
- **Encourage hand washing before and after eating**

Useful links for more information on food allergies:

www.foodallergy.org

www.isbe.net/nutrition/htmls/food_allergy_guidelines.htm

www.faiusa.org