Thursday 28th January 2016

Dear Parents,

St Joseph’s Primary School is concerned about the safety and well-being of all our students. Many of you will know someone who is affected by anaphylaxis, a life threatening allergic reaction. Our school does its best to be an allergy aware school. Staff have had training in severe allergy management and we have implemented lots of strategies to help keep students at risk of anaphylaxis as safe as we can.

We now have 7 students who live with the risk of anaphylaxis to foods and insect stings. Whilst these children are being taught to care for themselves at an age appropriate level, we ask that you help us educate your child on the importance of not sharing food with others, washing hands after eating and calling out to an adult if they think their friend with allergies is sick. With increased awareness and understanding of anaphylaxis, you will be able to help protect those around you.

A food allergy is an immune system response to a normally harmless food protein that the body believes is harmful. When the individual eats food containing that protein, the immune system releases massive amounts of chemicals, triggering symptoms that can affect a person’s breathing, gastrointestinal tract, skin, and/or heart. Anaphylaxis is the most severe form of allergic reaction and is potentially life-threatening. It must be treated as a medical emergency, requiring immediate treatment and urgent medical attention.

It is estimated that up to 400,000 (2%) Australians, including 1 in 20 children suffer from food allergies and some of them will experience a life-threatening (anaphylactic) reaction.

Symptoms of food allergy can include:

Mild to moderate symptoms                   Anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction)

• Hives or welts                           • Difficult/noisy breathing

• Swelling of the lips, face, eyes         • Swelling of tongue

• Abdominal pain and vomiting             • Swelling/tightness in throat

• Tingling in the mouth                    • Difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice

• Abdominal pain and vomiting             • Wheeze or persistent cough

• Tingling in the mouth                    • Loss of consciousness and/or collapse

• Pale and floppy (young children)

9 foods cause 90% of food allergies. These foods are:

• Egg                                     • Sesame

• Milk                                    • Soy

• Peanut                                  • Fish

• Tree nuts (cashew, almond, pistachio etc) • Crustacea (prawns, lobster, crabs etc)

• Wheat

Peanuts are the leading cause of severe allergic reactions, followed by tree nuts, shellfish, fish and milk.
Adrenaline is the first line treatment for severe allergic reactions and can be administered via auto-injector, called the EpiPen®.

To learn more about anaphylaxis and food allergies, go to www.allergyfacts.org.au and www.allergy.org.au

As the only way to manage a food allergy is avoidance, the school has implemented several strategies to help prevent a severe allergic reaction. We can never totally eliminate the risk of an anaphylaxis but we can all do things that will help lessen the risk. Please consider the child with food allergy when packing your child’s lunch or when sending in food for any occasion, including school excursions.

The school canteen has removed peanut butter and egg sandwiches as a safety measure. Foods that may contain traces of these foods are fine for the non-allergic students to consume at school as long as they do not share food. Students will be reminded about this during class time.

We appreciate your support in helping protect all children at school.

Regards

Gavan O’Donnell

PRINCIPAL