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ALLERGIES at FKS!

It's hard enough leaving your child at childcare for the first time, let alone if your little one suffers from potentially life-threatening allergic reactions known as **anaphylaxis**.

For many people, peanuts are a familiar snack food enjoyed at baseball games or on airplanes. Yet for some, even just the inhalation of small amounts of peanut particles can cause a severe and potentially deadly allergic reaction. In recent years, peanut allergies have become a hot topic in childcare facilities and schools; children are a large portion of the three million people who suffer from peanut and tree nut allergies.

Statistics

Peanut allergies are severe, and the number of people afflicted continues to grow. Consider the impact the following statistics have on the childcare industry:

- Over 3 million or approximately 1% of people in the United States are allergic to peanuts
- Less than 21% of children allergic to peanuts will outgrow it
- Peanut allergy is the most common cause of food-related death
- From 1997 to 2002 the prevalence of peanut allergies doubled
- Anaphylaxis occurs in 20% of allergic reactions to peanuts.

Common triggers of anaphylaxis include:

- **Food**
Milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, fish, crustaceans and soy are the most common food triggers which cause 90% of allergic reactions. However, any food can trigger anaphylaxis. It is important to understand that even trace amounts of food can cause a life-threatening reaction. Some extremely sensitive individuals can react to even the smell of a food (e.g. fish).
- **Insect Venom**
Bee, wasp and jumper ant stings are the most common causes of anaphylaxis from insect stings. Ticks and fire ants also cause anaphylaxis in susceptible individuals.
- **Medication**
Medications, both over the counter and prescribed, can cause life threatening allergic reactions. Individuals can also have anaphylactic reactions to herbal or 'alternative' medicines.
- **Other** - triggers such as latex or exercise induced anaphylaxis are less common and occasionally the trigger cannot be identified despite extensive investigation.

Signs and Symptoms:

The signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis may occur almost immediately after exposure or within the first 20 minutes after exposure. Rapid onset and development of potentially life-threatening symptoms are characteristic signs of anaphylaxis. Allergic symptoms may initially appear mild or moderate but can progress rapidly. The most dangerous allergic reactions involve the respiratory system (breathing) and/or cardiovascular system (heart and blood pressure).

Common Symptoms:

- **Mild to moderate allergic reaction**
 - Tingling of the mouth
 - Hives, welts or body redness
 - Swelling of the face, lips, eyes
 - Vomiting, abdominal pain

- **Severe allergic reaction- ANAPHYLAXIS**
 - Difficulty and/or noisy breathing
 - Swelling of the tongue
 - Swelling or tightness in the throat
 - Difficulty talking or hoarse voice
 - Wheeze or persistent cough
 - Loss of consciousness and/or collapse
 - Pale and floppy (young children)
 - CPR instructions

Every child at FKS with a known allergy has a written management plan for staff that clearly lists in sequential order the treatments to be given if an exposure occurs or symptoms develop. All children with moderate or severe reactions to allergens (including peanuts) **must** always have epinephrine available or in their environment to ensure timely administration of this potentially life-saving medication. A review of fatal anaphylactic reactions to peanuts found that most children either did not receive epinephrine or received it too late.

Here is what we do at FKS to avoid exposure to allergens.

- Allergies are posted clearly with an action plan, including a photo of each child, in the food service area.
- Reading the labels of each & every food package before serving snacks.
- Whenever possible, foods are made homemade to allow ingredients to be substituted.
- Ask parents to share a "safe box" for foods that are sure to be safe if there is ever a doubt.
- A "peanut free" table & chairs has been designated. ○
- Children are never allowed to share food at lunch. ○
- Separate bleach water & dish cloth that are peanut free have been designated for cleaning.
- Children with peanuts or nut products in their lunch are given a wipe to clean their hands before leaving the table to avoid cross contamination.
- Peanut butter has been removed from our snack menu and lesson planning.
- Remind children that some foods make other friends feel sick.
- Helping to remind allergy kids to ask if food is safe before eating it.
- FKS staff are trained to use EPI pens & to recognize signs of an allergic reaction.

What can you do to help us to make FKS the safest environment?

- Whenever possible, please leave peanuts and peanut products out of your child's lunch.
- Encourage children to stay seated while eating.

FKS is not converting to a "Peanut Free" environment but using all our efforts to avoid nuts and other allergens can assure that we continue to have the best possible space for young children.