

A Note from the URIS Nurse: Food Allergy Awareness for All!

What is an allergy?

An allergy is an exaggerated immunological reaction to a normally harmless substance (called an *allergen*).

Anaphylaxis is a severe and total-body allergic reaction that has the potential to be life-threatening. There are students who attend Goose Lake High School who are at high risk of experiencing anaphylaxis and some of their allergens include certain foods.

Anaphylaxis Prevention:

Avoiding allergens is the only way to prevent an anaphylactic reaction. Although it can be difficult to achieve complete avoidance of an allergen, reducing a person's exposure to the allergen is possible. While it may be helpful to avoid bringing allergenic foods into a facility, this practice can be challenging especially when multiple allergens are involved. It is important to note that food restrictions alone do not take the place of effective risk reduction strategies. The most successful strategies enlist the support of the entire community including parents, children and community program personnel.

Ways EVERYONE can help to reduce the risk of accidental exposure:

- Washing hands with soap & water and wiping around the mouth after eating (antibacterial hand sanitizers are not effective at removing the oily residue from nuts).
- Taking precautions to minimize the risk of cross-contamination in food handling & preparation.
- Reading food labels and asking food-allergic individuals about their specific needs.
- Not sharing food with friends who have an allergy or pressuring them into accepting food they do not want.
- Properly cleaning surfaces and disposing of food items after meals and snacks.
- All students are encouraged to comply with a 'no eating' rule during daily travel on school busses.

FYI – The food allergens at Goose Lake High School to be aware of:

- PEANUTS
- TREE NUTS (these may include: almonds, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, pecans, pine nuts, pistachio nuts, and walnuts)
- SEAFOOD* (this may include fish, shellfish and crustaceans from fresh or salt water)
- FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

*It is important to note that exposure to airborne proteins, such as the vapor or steam produced while cooking/heating certain foods (e.g. fish & poultry), has been known to cause an allergic reaction.

Milk products in powdered form which are inhaled may also cause an allergic reaction.

References:

Anaphylaxis in Schools and Other Settings, 3rd Ed. Revised (2016); Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology

Caring for Children with Anaphylaxis in a Community Program (2013); URIS Interdepartmental Committee: Manitoba Health, Healthy Living & Seniors, and Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning.