

RESPONDING TO ALLERGIES

WHAT IS AN ALLERGY?

An allergy is an adverse reaction that the body has to a particular insect sting, food or substance in the environment. Most substances that cause allergies are not harmful and have no effect on people who are not allergic.

PEOPLE WITH ALLERGIES: SPORT'S DUTY OF CARE

Sports organisations have a duty to provide safe opportunities for people of all abilities, regardless of any medical conditions, disabilities or allergies they may have. It is important that people with medical conditions or allergies are not unnecessarily excluded from participating in activities, and that reasonable steps are taken to accommodate their needs.

THE INDIVIDUAL OR PARENT/CARER'S RESPONSIBILITY

When people join a sports club, they or parents/carers should:

- complete the medical information/consent form fully and accurately
- talk to the coach/leader about their or their child's specific needs and how to address/accommodate any identified risk
- update the coach/leader/club of any change in circumstances
- consider a medical alert bracelet, watch or ID for themselves or their child
- check the expiry date of any medication
- ensure they or their child have a 'rescue pack' which will be given to the coach/leader and administered if necessary. This may include antihistamines or an inhaler for mild reactions, and possibly adrenaline injectors for more serious reactions e.g. anaphylaxis.

WHAT SHOULD ORGANISATIONS CONSIDER WHEN SOMEONE WITH A SERIOUS ALLERGY IS ATTENDING A SPORTS ACTIVITY?

INFORMATION CONSENT FORMS

- Gain consent (covering both the individual's participation in the activity and the administration of medication or other medical assistance if required) at least annually.
- Ask the individual or parents/carers to update information about medical conditions (including allergies) as relevant.
- Gain information/consent from individuals or parents/carers at least three weeks prior to any event, to allow information to

be collated and an individual risk assessment and care plan developed.

- Ensure the consent form or a summary of relevant information and any medication travels with the individual or child so that it is readily available should it be required.

FOOD

- If food is being provided, make sure that those with allergies are included as much as possible. If a food isn't suitable and an alternative can't be found, ask the individual or parents/carers for a suggestion.
- If an individual has a nut allergy, it's safer that nuts are banned from the organisation completely.
- If prizes/gifts are given it is best not to use sweets and chocolate.

INSECT STINGS

- Most people at risk of a severe allergic reaction find the prospect of being stung very frightening. Less than 0.5% of the population experience a severe, generalised allergic reaction known as anaphylaxis.
- Fortunately, the risks of this happening are reduced if precautions are taken. The chances of a sting proving fatal are reduced considerably if the victim is carrying self-injectable adrenaline (also known as epinephrine).
- A bee or wasp sting may cause a large swelling at the site of the sting. The swelling may be minor if the sting site is on the body however; if it is on the face or in the airway it could prove to be more serious.

OUTINGS

- If eating out, the individual or parents/carers may be able to recommend somewhere that caters for their or their child's needs.
- Make sure you know where the nearest hospital is in case it is required.
- Ensure that you have all the information from the information/consent form that you need to be able to deal with the individual's condition, and take emergency contact details with you.

ADRENALINE INJECTORS

(Brand names commonly used are EpiPen® and Anapen®)

- If an individual has a serious allergy, they can be in danger of having an anaphylactic reaction (see below for more detail) which could cause blood pressure to drop, swelling of the throat and blocked airways.
- A person in danger of having an anaphylactic reaction must carry an adrenaline injector which contains adrenaline and works quickly to reverse the symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction.
- Get a health professional to show you how to use the injector if it has been agreed with the individual and/or parents/carers that a coach/leader will administer medication in an emergency. Allergywise online training can help. Get expert advice if you're unsure of any situation or condition.
- Ensure that adrenaline injectors are within their expiry date. An out-of-date injector may offer some protection, but this will be limited.

COACHES/LEADERS SHOULD:

- ensure all individuals attending the club have complete/up to date consent forms, with full details of their allergies
- have a copy of the individual's risk assessment and care plan
- communicate with individual's and parents/carers directly
- ensure that information about an individual's medical condition or allergy is shared with and easily available to any adult responsible for the activity/competition and free time
- store information/consent forms in a confidential place that is accessible to leaders
- ensure correct storage and administration of medication
- record incidents or concerns
- have their mobile phones charged and check they have a signal to allow calls to be made
- plan for additional supervision, e.g. when around food, in case of a reaction

ABOUT ANAPHYLAXIS

Anaphylaxis (also known as anaphylactic shock) is an allergic condition that can be severe and potentially life threatening. Anaphylaxis is the body's immune system reacting badly to a substance (an allergen), such as food or an insect sting. The whole body can be affected, usually within minutes of contact with a substance, although in some cases the reaction can occur hours later. Anaphylaxis can cause the following symptoms in the body:

- **skin:** itching, flushing, hives (urticaria), rash or swelling (angioedema)

- **eyes:** itching, tearing, redness or swelling around the eyes
- **nose and mouth:** sneezing, runny nose, nasal congestion, swelling of the tongue or a metallic taste
- **lungs and throat:** difficulty breathing, coughing, chest tightness, wheezing or other sounds of laboured breathing, increased mucus production, throat swelling or itching, hoarseness, change in voice or a sensation of choking
- **heart and circulation:** dizziness, weakness, fainting, rapid, slow, or irregular heart rate or low blood pressure
- **digestive system:** nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps or diarrhoea
- **nervous system:** Anxiety or confusion
- feeling of impending doom

In extreme cases anaphylaxis can result in sudden collapse without any other warning symptoms.

WHAT TO CONSIDER IF AN INDIVIDUAL CARRIES ADRENALINE INJECTORS?

Adrenaline injectors rarely need to be used however if an adrenaline injector is prescribed it must always be available. Only a person who has been trained in their use should administer one. At least two of the leaders should be trained in the use of an adrenaline injector. If an adrenaline injector does have to be used the person needs to be taken to hospital for a check-up and observation as an anaphylactic reaction can re-occur again within 24/36 hours.

WHO CAN DELIVER TRAINING ON THE USE OF ADRENALINE INJECTORS?

A qualified doctor or nurse can give training to leaders on how to use an adrenaline injector. If this is not a feasible option for your organisation, please contact St John Ambulance or visit Allergywise online. Adrenaline injectors' training is not covered in the basic first aid training course. Parents or individuals may also know how to access suitable training through their medical support or at least be able to signpost clubs towards guidance and support.

USEFUL CONTACTS:

Allergy UK - 01322 619 898 or email info@allergyuk.org

Anapen - www.anapen.ie

EpiPen - www.epipen.co.uk

Kidsaware - www.kidsaware.co.uk

St John Ambulance -

www.sja.org.uk (provide Anaphylaxis first aid training)

The Anaphylaxis Campaign - www.anaphylaxis.org.uk