

ALLERGIC REACTIONS

Know the signs and how to respond

An allergy is the response of the body's immune system to a normally harmless substance. These substances, known as allergens, are mistakenly identified by the immune system as a threat.

Common symptoms of a mild allergic reaction

Schools are not expected to diagnose allergies, but some symptoms may indicate that a pupil is experiencing an allergic reaction:

- Itchy skin or a raised rash (hives)
- Swelling around the lips, eyes, or face
- Sneezing or a runny nose
- Watery or itchy eyes
- Tingling in the mouth
- Mild stomach discomfort, nausea, or vomiting
- Complaints that their throat feels "scratchy"

Younger pupils may struggle to describe what they are feeling and may instead appear distressed, itchy, or uncomfortable.

Schools can expose pupils to a variety of allergens:

- **Foods**, such as peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, sesame, wheat, fish, or shellfish
- **Insect stings**, particularly from bees or wasps during outdoor activities
- **Pollen**, especially during spring and summer months
- **Animal dander**, sometimes present on clothing
- **Medications**, including antibiotics
- **Latex**, sometimes found in gloves or sports equipment

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Symptoms of a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)

- **Sudden swelling** of the lips, mouth, throat or tongue
- **A rash that is swollen**, raised or itchy (hives)
- **Coughing, wheezing, very fast breathing or struggling to breathe:** they may feel like they are choking or gasp for air
- **Tightening** throat and struggling to swallow
- **Blue, grey or pale skin**, tongue or lips - for black or brown skin, this may be easier to see on the palms of the hands or soles of the feet
- **Skin that feels cold** to the touch
- **Confusion, tiredness, drowsiness or dizziness**
- **Fainting**, losing consciousness
- **Becoming limp**, floppy or unresponsive

These symptoms signal a **severe allergic reaction** that can **escalate** rapidly, potentially leading to **anaphylaxis**, a **life-threatening condition** requiring **immediate attention**.

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What school staff can do

If you think a pupil is experiencing anaphylaxis, call 999 immediately.

1. **Use an adrenaline auto-injector.** Do not wait to see if things improve, as anaphylaxis can progress quickly.
2. **Call 999 for an ambulance** and say that you think a pupil is experiencing anaphylaxis.
3. **Allow the pupil to lie down in a quiet area.**
Raise their legs, and if they are struggling to breathe, raise their shoulders or sit them up slowly.
4. If they have been stung by an insect, **try to remove the sting** if it's still in the skin.
5. **Use a second adrenaline auto-injector if symptoms do not improve** after 5 minutes.



- ! Always contact emergency services after using an adrenaline auto-injector.
- ! Do not offer food or drinks as this could potentially make the condition
- ! Do not ask or allow them to stand or walk, even if they seem to feel better. Standing up can cause a sudden, severe drop in blood pressure. Even after receiving adrenaline, they must remain resting. Standing up too soon can cause symptoms to return or worsen.