

Patient Update

Classroom triggers of allergies and asthma

Going back to school is a fun and exciting time, however, allergies and asthma may be big challenges facing children when they return to school. These challenges may range from discomfort that makes it hard to concentrate on school work, to symptoms that reduce their ability to participate in recess or physical education class, to life-threatening reactions to food or insect stings.

In fact, children miss about 10 million days of school each year due to asthma and two million days due to allergy symptoms.

Therefore, it is important that children and their families work with teachers, coaches and school nurses to deal with allergies and asthma. Food allergies, asthma and allergic rhinitis are three of the biggest conditions that affect children in school.

The most common allergens at school that may cause an allergic or asthmatic reaction include:

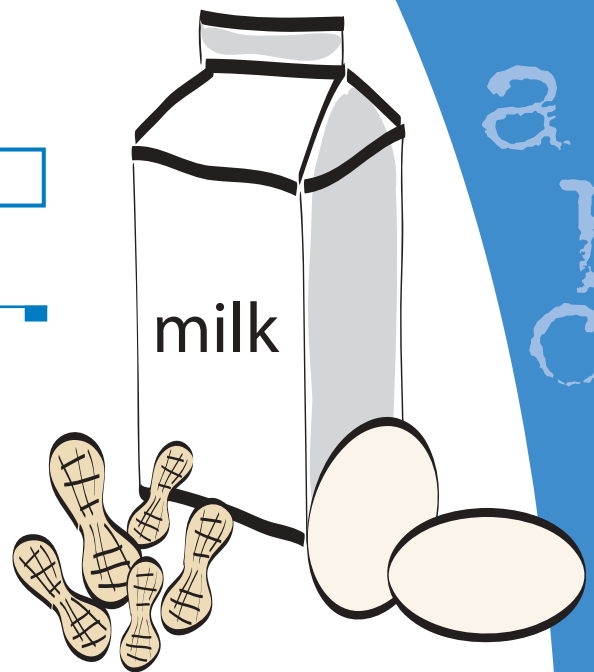
- Dust mites
- Chalk dust
- Animal dander from class pets or pet hair on a student's clothing
- Pollen and molds
- Exercise

If your child has food sensitivities, remind them not to share food with their friends. Six foods account for 90% of food allergy in children:

- Milk
- Egg
- Peanuts
- Wheat
- Soy
- Tree nuts

Parents have less control over the allergens their children may be exposed to at school than they do at home. The key to reducing the severity of symptoms in your child at school is avoidance of the triggers. Take a look at this helpful checklist to find out what you can do to help relieve some potential allergens that may be affecting your child's allergies or asthma.

- Before school starts, tour the school to identify potential asthma/allergy triggers in the classrooms
- Make sure a "School Management Plan"



is on file for your child at school

- Schedule a meeting with teachers and the school nurse to discuss your child's condition
- Encourage children to take their maintenance medications as prescribed
- Review your child's triggers with them and encourage them to ask their teacher for help when symptoms worsen
- If your child is allergic to certain foods, inform school cafeteria staff and teachers to avoid those and suggest safe alternatives
- Have your food sensitive child bring a bag lunch to school
- Make sure an Epi-pen is with the child, teacher or school nurse and that they all know how to use it
- Inform physical education teachers and coaches about asthma and warning signs of an exacerbation

Many school children suffer from food allergies, asthma and allergic rhinitis, but, if appropriate measures are taken, they may not be endangered or slowed down by these diseases. It is important to have good communication with school personnel about your child's condition.

It is also important to review these diseases on a regular basis with a physician and update the medications and treatment plan. Allergist/immunologists see children with food allergies, asthma and allergic rhinitis every day and are ideal physicians to consult with about these diseases.