

SCHOOL HEALTH

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A handwritten note titled "Sarah's Allergies" with a table of reactions, possible reasons, and dates.

Reaction	Possible reason	Date
Itchy eyes	Feather pillow?	1/5/99
	Dusty bedroom?	
Wheezing	Whole milk at Bobbi's?	1/5/99
	Eggs?	1/16/99
Itchy skin	Cleaning the garage with Grandpa?	1/25/99

Allergies

Allergies are a leading reason for children missing school. Missing school means less learning. Some common allergies include:

- Allergic Rhinitis. Symptoms include frequent sneezing, running nose, itchy eyes, trouble hearing due to blocked ear tubes. Children with this condition may be allergic to plant pollen, dust, molds, or pet dander.
- Atopic dermatitis (hives and eczema). Symptoms include dry scaly, itchy skin rash. This can be triggered by dust or molds, heat and humidity, sweating, stress or bee stings. Hives are red, very itchy, swollen areas of the skin that may arise suddenly and leave quickly. They often appear in clusters, with new clusters appearing as other areas clear. Hives may occur alone or with other symptoms.
- Food allergies. Symptoms include vomiting, skin rash, difficulty breathing. In some cases, reactions can be life-threatening. Foods that most commonly cause allergic reactions include nuts, shellfish, mild and eggs. Children with food allergies should avoid even tiny amounts of the substances and should not share food or snacks.

Severe Allergic Reactions

In severe cases, exposure to an allergen can cause a life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis – a systemic allergic reaction that can be severe and sometimes fatal. The first signs of anaphylaxis may be a feeling of warmth, flushing, tingling in the mouth or a red, itchy rash. Other symptoms may include feelings of light-headedness, shortness of breath, severe sneezing, anxiety, stomach cramps, and/or vomiting and diarrhea. In severe cases, people may experience a drop in blood pressure that results in a loss of consciousness and shock. Without immediate treatment, anaphylaxis may cause death.

Symptoms of anaphylaxis are reversed by treatment with injectable epinephrine, antihistamines, and other emergency

measures. It is essential that anyone with symptoms suggesting possible anaphylaxis get emergency treatment immediately. It is possible to have an anaphylactic reaction the very first time someone is exposed to an allergen, and if re-exposed, each time is usually progressively worse.

Bee Stings

Spring is in the air. The days of warmer weather and budding trees are a welcome sight to most of us, however, along with warmer weather comes the bumble bees, hornets and wasps.

Most stings cause only limited local inflammatory reactions consisting of pain, itching, redness, and swelling. These reactions are usually more a nuisance than a medical emergency. However, local reactions can be extensive, involving the person's entire arm. When this occurs, the swelling and redness may peak two to three days after the sting and last a week or longer. Signs and symptoms of life-threatening reactions include nausea, vomiting, brochospasm, wheezing and difficulty breathing.

If you are stung by a bee you can treat by:

- Removing stinger as soon as possible. Scrape stinger away with hard object such as a fingernail or credit card.
- Wash the sting site with soap and water to prevent infection.
- Apply an ice pack over the sting site to slow absorption of the venom and relieve pain.
- Use anti-sting medication available over the counter that has a topical anesthetic.
- A topical steroid cream such as hydrocortisone can help combat local swelling and itching.
- An antihistamine, such as Benadryl, may prevent some local symptoms if given early, but it works too slowly to counteract a life-threatening allergic reaction
- Always watch the person for at least 30 minutes for signs of an allergic reaction
- **For those who are severely allergic, a dose of epinephrine is the only effective treatment. Call 911 immediately and tell them the person is having an anaphylactic reaction**