

## **ANAPHYLAXIS INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

### **Background:**

The Catholic Schools Office (CSO) Procedures in relation to the management of students at risk of an anaphylactic episode follow the Second Edition of the Anaphylaxis Guidelines developed and adopted (in conjunction with Anaphylaxis Australia) by the Department of Schools and Communities, the Catholic Education Commission NSW and the Association of Independent Schools NSW.

All students in CSO schools at risk of an Anaphylactic episode are required to have an action plan based on the template provided by the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy Inc (ASCI).

New guidelines for the management of Anaphylaxis were expected for release in late 2012 but have not yet been made available. In addition procedures already in place, the CSO has reviewed the advice provided to schools administered by the NSW Department of Education and Communities in response to the Coroner's report on the most recent death in May 2012 of a student with Anaphylaxis. This advice has been provided to all CSO schools in the Diocese.

The recommendations from the Coroner include restricting nuts in schools, eliminating nuts from cooking classes and that students with Asthma or allergies be actively encouraged to carry their own EpiPens or their ventilators (most deaths from Anaphylaxis have occurred in children/young people who also have asthma). The Coroner also recommended improved training, especially face to face training.

All staff members employed by the CSO, including staff at St Rose, receive information about Anaphylaxis management and training in how to use and EpiPen and AnaPen annually. Training is provided at least every second year on site by specially accredited nursing staff from the SAN College of Education. In the alternate year staff are required to complete an online elearning module. At St Rose face to face training from the SAN is provided each year.

Witnessing a child or young person experiencing an anaphylactic episode creates an extremely stressful and tense situation. With most episodes the person responding has only a few minutes to locate the device and administer the medication. At least two deaths from Anaphylaxis, including the most recent death, occurred because

the staff members involved accidentally administered the medication to themselves. To try to avoid this situation all CSO schools in Broken Bay were advised, after the first child death to be investigated some years ago, to have access to a 'spare' auto-injector. This spare dose of medication enables a second auto-injector to be used on the student should a staff member inadvertently not administer the medication correctly. It also enables staff to follow advice from the Coroner that a second dose of adrenaline should be administered within five minutes if the student has not responded sufficiently to the first dose.

As an additional measure, in 2013, the CSO has purchased 'blank' EpiPens and Anapens for each school so staff can practise regularly how to use this equipment.

### **St Rose Policy**

St Rose has a '**no sharing of food policy**'. While this may be viewed by some as an extreme measure the safety and wellbeing of our students is of paramount concern and it is not possible to provide an environment deemed as 'nut free'. Parents will be aware that it is just not possible to monitor all food brought to school. Some children either with or without parent permission may purchase food items even after leaving home and these may contain nuts. In some situations other adults may inadvertently provide nut products. In the investigation into the recent death, evidence was given to the Coroner, *'that restricting nuts at schools was more effective than banning them, because bans could make students and staff complacent about the risks and be lulled into a false sense of security.'* Because of this policy we need parents to assist us by explaining the 'no sharing of food' policy to their child/children. If at all possible avoid sending food containing nut products for lunch and recess. (The latest student death from Anaphylaxis occurred by the ingestion of a very small amount of a cookie containing a walnut.)

Be mindful about the ingredients of food brought to school functions where children might be present.

When responding to requests for donations of food for school events ensure the product is clearly labelled and all ingredients are listed.

Parents must always ensure that they discuss and regularly remind their child what they can and can't eat at functions such as discos, cake stalls. Advice from Anaphylaxis Australia repeatedly stresses the importance of children and young people developing an awareness of those food products that might trigger an

Anaphylactic/allergic episode and from this awareness take responsibility (of course at their level of maturity) for managing this life threatening condition.

Every room has a wash basin with a soap dispenser. The children are encouraged to wash their hands if they have inadvertently handled something that has/or might have contained nuts, to ensure the allergic child/ren are not in any danger.

If your child does come to school with a nut related product- (not one that states 'may contain traces of nuts') or a Peanut Butter/Nutella sandwich) the staff have been asked to provide a 'safety net' around the child at risk by placing that child a safe distance away from the possible trigger.

Care should be taken to not confuse Anaphylaxis with Allergies. Many children suffer from Allergies but never experience an Anaphylactic episode. There are many causes of allergies and these differ both in cause and degree for each individual. Many children are allergic to pet hair/fur. This is one of the main reasons why the school site is a **pet free zone** and if children wish to bring their pet into the school for news this needs to be approved by the office, as we have all the details of students and what they are allergic to.

**Our aim is to ensure ALL students are safe and for the sake of a little inconvenience a life may be saved!**