

## Nut Allergies

An aspect of school life at OLA that has been identified as a particular safety concern is the provision for children with severe nut allergies.

From the regular coverage regarding this in the media, I am sure that you are aware that the incidence of food allergies in children is increasing. As a result, many schools are adjusting eating and tuckshop arrangements and informing parents/caregivers of possible allergens and foods that would best be consumed at home, rather than at school, to avoid a potentially fatal allergic reaction in students who have these allergies.

This year there are a number of children who have high level food allergies to nuts. Ingestion of nuts or nut products in these children will result in anaphylaxis, a severe allergic reaction. It is also possible that contact through touching plastic wrap or packaging in which nuts have been stored; holding hands with children who have eaten nuts or nut products; playing on playground apparatus or sharing equipment that has been touched by another child with nut residue on his or her hands, etc. could also trigger this same reaction.

An anaphylactic reaction is life threatening and results in the rapid swelling of the tongue and throat, difficulty breathing and/or an inability to breath and loss of consciousness. Immediate treatment begins with an injection of adrenaline, using an EpiPen, before emergency ambulance care and transport to hospital.

All of the current literature available on food allergies and anaphylaxis suggests that prevention is the key to enhancing the safety of children with food allergies. Prevention includes taking precautions to avoid possible situations in which children who have these allergies may come into contact with nuts or nut products during the everyday course of school life.

Staff have met with these children and their families to develop a detailed management plan to address their particular needs. As well as this, as children from all year levels regularly interact with each other throughout the day, I am also asking your assistance in ensuring that all OLA children refrain from bringing nuts, nut spreads (peanut paste, nutella), nut bars (muesli, health) or any product with obvious nuts pieces to school. **Ideally, these foods should be eaten after school.** However, if they are eaten for breakfast, may I additionally request that you ensure that your child has thoroughly washed their hands and face, and brushed his or her teeth, as nut residue can remain in the mouth for up to six hours after eating. **Any adult who will be visiting or assisting in any capacity at the school should also take the same precautions.**

Acknowledging that it is impossible to avoid all foods that may contain nuts or nut products, by eliminating those that obviously do it will contribute significantly to improving the safety of our children.

Whilst I acknowledge that this request may cause inconvenience for some families, as a community, each of us has a responsibility to all of our children, including ensuring that our school environment is safe and, in this particular instance, to minimize the inherent risks associated with severe food allergies.

Thank you for your anticipated assistance with this request, it is again appreciated. Please make contact through the school office if you have any questions regarding the above.