

**Bialik Hebrew Day School**

**Policies and Procedures  
For  
Life Threatening Allergies**



**2009/10**

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**“...1 in 5 children with food allergies will have a reaction while in school”**

(source: *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*)

**BIALIK IS A PEANUT/NUT AWARE SCHOOL!**

Students, parents and staff (teaching, administrative, custodial) must make every effort not to bring into the school any product that contains peanuts and/or nuts or any pre-packaged product that is labeled with an “allergy alert”.

With regard to other life-threatening allergies, individualized management plans will be developed, as required, based on discussions between the parents, student and school; eg: safe eating areas, clean-up, etc.

There are a number of children at Bialik with food allergies and some, when exposed to certain foods, can develop a reaction known as anaphylaxis. It is also important to note that there may be students with undiagnosed food allergies who experience their first allergic reaction at school.

**What is Anaphylaxis?**

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that can result in death within minutes if not immediately treated. An anaphylactic reaction can develop within seconds of exposure to the allergen or after several hours. Any combination of the following symptoms may indicate the onset of a reaction:

Face	Airway	Stomach	Skin	General
itching and/or swelling of the eyes, red watery eyes	trouble breathing or swallowing	pain	hives (anywhere on the body)	weakness
itching and/or swelling of the lips or tongue	hoarseness	vomiting	itchiness (anywhere on the body)	sense of doom
flushing and/or swelling of the face	choking	diarrhea	swelling (anywhere on the body)	loss of consciousness
itchy and/or runny nose	coughing			dizziness
	wheezing			
	throat tightness or closing			

The top 10 food allergens found to most frequently cause reactions are: peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, soy, sesame seed, wheat, sulphites, fish, shellfish.

Non-food triggers of anaphylactic reactions include insect stings, latex, medications and vigorous exercise. Anaphylaxis can result regardless of the substance that triggers it, however, peanuts are the most common cause of fatal food anaphylaxis.

Bialik has developed the following guidelines and procedures in an attempt to meet the needs of our children with allergies by reducing the risk of exposing them to anaphylactic causative agents in the classroom and in common school areas.

## **Important Guidelines**

These guidelines address the responsibilities of the following stakeholders with regard to:

- ❖ Information and awareness for the entire school population
- ❖ Minimizing and controlling allergens when necessary and possible
- ❖ Emergency response procedures in case of accidental exposure

## **Stakeholders**

- ❖ Parents of Students with Allergies
- ❖ Students with Food Allergies
- ❖ School Administration
- ❖ Classroom Teachers
- ❖ Other School Personnel
- ❖ General Parent Population
- ❖ General Student Population
- ❖ PTA

## **Responsibilities of Parents of Students with Allergies**

- Parents will provide:
  - ❖ Picture of the child with Peanut/nut allergy
  - ❖ notification of the allergy on Profile of Anaphylactic Form, to be sent by the school administration with the 'May Package' and responded to by the parents in the appropriate time
  - ❖ yearly update reporting changes in the child's health and/or allergy status
  - ❖ a description of food restrictions
  - ❖ two up-to-date single-dose EpiPens<sup>®</sup> one for the child, to be carried by the child at all times, and one for the classroom
  - ❖ Parents are responsible for checking EpiPens<sup>®</sup> for expiry date and discolouration, and for replacing them when necessary.
  - ❖ Parents will provide a pouch (e.g. fanny pack) for the EpiPen<sup>®</sup> for the child to wear to school
  - ❖ a MedicAlert<sup>®</sup> tag [at parents' discretion]
  - ❖ written authorization for the school to administer prescribed medications (Appendix A)
  - ❖ any other special instructions
  - ❖ alternate snacks, provided by the parent, to be kept in the classroom for the child in the case of special class celebrations (e.g. birthday parties) if the child has been instructed not to receive any snacks provided by the school
- Parents will teach their children to:
  - ❖ recognize and communicate symptoms/distress when he/she feels a reaction starting
  - ❖ know where medication is kept
  - ❖ carry his/her own EpiPen<sup>®</sup> at all times

- ❖ not share snacks, lunches or drinks
- ❖ understand the importance of hand washing
- ❖ take as much responsibility as possible for his/her own safety

### **Responsibilities of Students with Food Allergies**

- Take as much responsibility as possible for avoiding the allergen
- Always check labels (age appropriate)
- Wash hands before and after eating
- Learn to recognize symptoms of an allergic reaction
- Promptly inform an adult if they suspect they are experiencing an allergic reaction
- Carry an EpiPen<sup>®</sup> at all times
- Know how to use an EpiPen<sup>®</sup> (age appropriate) – staff should note that self-administration may not be possible during an anaphylactic reaction
- Wear a MedicAlert<sup>®</sup> tag [at parents' discretion]

### **Responsibilities of the School**

Students, parents and staff (teaching, administrative, custodial) must make every effort not to bring into the school any product that contains peanuts and/or nuts.

There are several children at Bialik with food allergies and some, when exposed to certain foods, can develop a reaction known as anaphylaxis. It is also important to note that there may be students with undiagnosed food allergies who experience their first allergic reaction at school.

Ensuring the safety of anaphylactic students in a school setting depends on the cooperation of the entire school community. To minimize the risk of exposure and to ensure rapid response to an emergency, specific school personnel will be designated to implement, manage and enforce the following responsibilities:

- Identify each child with food allergies by posting the 'List of Anaphylactic Students' in the school office
- Give the 'Emergency Allergy Alert Form' to the homeroom teacher to be placed along with the students' EpiPens<sup>®</sup> (if provided) in a designated box on the wall near the door. Pictures of students with food allergies will be placed next to that box. All 'Profile' binders will be placed in that box.
- Provide the parents of the child with food allergies an *Emergency Allergy Alert and Consent Form* to complete and sign (Appendix A) to be sent during the summer.
- EpiPens<sup>®</sup>, provided by the parents, will be stored in the child's classroom in the box next to the door. 'List of Anaphylactic Students' for grades 7 & 8 will be placed in all classrooms.
- Place a backup EpiPens<sup>®</sup> in each of the following common areas of the school: the office, lunch room, outside both gyms and in close proximity to the school yard, inside the doors of entrances to the school. EpiPens<sup>®</sup> will be checked regularly for expiry dates and discolouration, and be replaced when necessary. EpiPen<sup>®</sup> instructions will be posted on the wall on which it is located.
- Document procedures for dealing with allergies on Field Trips [in the Teacher's Manual]

- Ensure that parents have signed the “*Emergency Allergy Alert and Consent Form*” in order for the teacher to administer or supervise the taking of medication.
- Periodically inform parents that Bialik is a peanut and nut aware school (including the playground areas) and ask for their support at all times.
- Arrange for training sessions for all school personnel (including secretaries, teaching assistants, caretakers) on how to recognize and treat anaphylactic reactions, on school protocol for responding to emergencies and on how to administer an auto injector (Epi Pen). Training will be conducted by a qualified independent instructor. A record of training will be kept.
- Develop and implement standard age-appropriate education on food allergies for students that encompasses the following: what is a food allergy, school policy, symptom recognition, treatment, the need to respect peers with allergies.
- Hang signs on school doors (inside and outside) indicating school policy regarding peanuts/nuts in order to inform visitors of school policy and prohibited food items and to act as a constant visual reminder to parents, students and staff.
- Contracts for the rental of school property to third parties will include information of the school’s policy
- Reinforce the policy and information about life-threatening allergies to students and staff. Provide Teachers with information for yearly notification of parents of the presence of an allergic child in their class. Teachers will discuss procedure at Curriculum Night.
- Provide regular information regarding allergies and anaphylaxis in the PTA newsletter and on the school’s website.
- Will make an effort to ensure that non-food sources of allergens in the school (e.g. hand soap cleaning solutions) do not contain any peanut/nut oils or derivatives or any of the top ten allergens listed on Page 3.
- Students with food allergies will not be asked to engage in activities such as garbage disposal, school yard clean-up, etc., given the potential for contact with food wrappers/packaging. They will be assigned other “public Service” chores.
- Procedures for the After School Care Program must be consistent with school policies.
- This document in its entirety is posted on the school web site ([www.bialik.ca](http://www.bialik.ca)).
- A copy of this document will be given to the cleaning company
- Inform cleaning suppliers of our policy.
- This document may be reviewed on an annual basis, or as needed.

### **Responsibilities of Classroom Teachers**

- Display a laminated sign indicating the names and pictures of allergic children on the EpiPen® box.
- Inform parents/grade parents at Curriculum Night of the peanut and nut aware policy and remind them to choose safe foods for classroom events, lunches and snacks.
- Inform parents/grade parents at Curriculum Night of the presence of an allergic child in the class.
- Reassure the children with food allergies that they are aware of their medical needs.
- Discuss anaphylaxis with the class in age appropriate terms.
- Remind parents of the children with food allergies to provide snacks, as an alternative to the snack provided during class celebrations, if their children are not to receive food provided by the school.
- Ensure that all food for class distribution (except birthday celebrations) is organized by the grade parents of the class. Teachers must not ask parents to supply food for ad hoc celebrations or authorize the distribution of food items brought by parents on an impromptu basis.
- Regularly discourage students from sharing lunches or trading snacks.
- Reinforce with all students the importance of hand washing before and after eating.
- Call parents who have sent a prohibited food item to school for lunch/snack or class celebrations. The item will be returned home. Second time, send a letter to that parent.
- Remind the students that EpiPens® are to be carried by them throughout the school day.
- Check that the use of food in crafts, science projects and cooking days is checked for the top ten allergens listed on Page 3 and for any other allergen relevant to the class.
- Send a standard “*Allergy Alert*” letter notifying parents of the presence of an anaphylactic student in their child’s class (separate from the back-to-school mailing).
- Be safe, not sorry! All complaints from students with food allergies should be taken seriously (Appendix C – How a Child Might Describe a Reaction). Delaying administration of the EpiPen® at the first sign of symptoms is a large contributing factor to fatal reactions.

### **Responsibilities of General Parent Population**

- Ensure that your child washes their hands, face and checks their clothing if he/she has eaten peanut butter or any other peanut/nut products before coming to school
- Ensure that student lunches and snacks do not contain any food that contains peanuts and/or nuts
- Ensure that food sent in for class celebrations/parties:
  - ❖ is from the Safe Snack list provided by the PTA. All other foods will be sent home.

- ❖ is kept in the original packaging and has an ingredient label. In the absence of ingredient labels, e.g. baked goods from one of the pre-approved bakeries, the box should be sealed with the tape that displays the bakery's name/logo.
- ❖ Fruit, vegetable and other food cannot be cut or plated at home. This must be done only at school.

- Do **not** send homemade food items for class celebrations. Homemade food is allowed in individual student lunches/snacks but cannot contain peanuts/nuts.
- Inform other caregivers in the house of the abovementioned policies. e.g, nannies, grandparents, etc.

### **Responsibilities of General Student Population**

- Do not share food or snacks.
- Learn to recognize the signs of an anaphylactic reaction.
- Do not bring any peanut/nut products into the school building or the schoolyard.
- Be a buddy and help protect your friend.
- Wash hands before and after eating

### **Responsibilities of the PTA**

- Publish, on the school's website, in consultation with parents of students with peanut/nut allergy, a Class Celebration Snack List. This list will only contain Kosher items that:
  - ❖ are explicitly labeled peanut/nut free; or
  - ❖ contain a peanut/nut free icon on the package; or
  - ❖ are from a pre-approved bakery that **guarantees** peanut/nut free products.

The list will be updated as necessary.

The safe snack list will not list suggestions for individual student lunches/snacks. Parents will be instructed that lunch/snack foods that do not contain any type of "allergy alert warning" on the label are acceptable. Always check the labels!

- Use uniform procedures, provided by the 'Food Allergies Committee' for assessing food suppliers' peanut/nut free status (applies to the lunch program and to food distributed by the PTA Gradeparents).
- At the beginning of the year send out a notification letter/waiver to parents of allergic children who have signed up for the Lunch Program (or receive food distributed by the PTA) informing them that not all the food suppliers guarantee their products to be peanut/nut free (Appendix J).
- Reinforce the policy and information about life-threatening allergies to parents by:
  - ❖ Providing Gradeparents with a script for yearly notification of parents of the presence of an allergic child in their class. Gradeparents will inform parents via the beginning of the year telephone call.
  - ❖ Providing regular information regarding allergies and anaphylaxis in the PTA newsletter.
- Use the established procedures for the After Four program as well.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why are we now referring to the school as peanut/nut aware instead of peanut/nut free?**

We can never completely guarantee that the school doesn't have peanuts or nuts without searching everyone and everything all the time. Even then, students can have peanut butter residue on their hands from meals at home.

### **Why should parents and staff abide by the schools' allergy policy?**

It is the joint responsibility of school staff, students and parents to keep the school environment safe for all children. An allergic child who experiences a reaction requires immediate emergency care, which is not only traumatic for the child, but also distressing for anyone who witnesses the event. No parent or child wants to be responsible for causing a classmate to suffer anaphylactic shock, much less one that results in a fatality. Most families are willing to abide by the policy because they feel that a child's right to life is greater than their child's right to eat a peanut butter sandwich for lunch.

### **Why are parents not allowed to bring in homemade goods for class birthday celebrations?**

Because of Bialik's Kashrut policy and potential cross-contamination of allergens. Cross-contamination occurs when a food is inadvertently contaminated with allergen residues during preparation, packaging or serving e.g. contaminating the jam jar by using the same knife that was used to spread peanut butter, making chocolate chip cookies with improperly cleaned utensils or baking pans that were previously used to make peanut butter cookies .

### **a) What happened to the previous Peanut/Nut Free Snack list? and;**

### **b) Why has the class celebration food list become so restrictive?**

a) It is impossible to keep an up to date list because of the following:

- ❖ ingredients can change without warning
- ❖ ingredients often vary depending on the product size (i.e. regular and mini)
- ❖ ingredients often vary depending upon the manufacturing location

The safest approach is to read the ingredients for all products every time a purchase is made.

b) Over the past few years, there have been numerous incidents at the school where contaminated food and/or actual peanut/nuts have been brought into the school and/or distributed to the class. Most incidences are unintentional and Canada's complicated labeling regulations are a factor in the frequency of these accidents. Manufacturers may have cross-contaminated products but choose not to put a "may contain" warning on the ingredient list because it is not required by law. As a consumer, you have no way of knowing this. As a result, the school has decided that the safest way to protect anaphylactic students from tragedy is for everyone to abide by the new list.

### **I have been told by a parent that their child has a "mild" peanut allergy. Is this an accurate assessment of the situation?**

Parents sometimes minimize symptoms of previous non-fatal reactions and deny the likelihood of a severe reaction. The severity of reactions is neither consistent nor predictable. A severe reaction may follow a mild one. Since it is not possible to predict who might have a fatal reaction, most allergists recommend that anyone with a peanut/nut allergy, regardless of degree of previous reactivity, consider themselves to be an anaphylactic risk and take the appropriate precautions.

**Have any Ontario students actually died from allergic reactions at school?**

Yes. The most recent fatality occurred on September 30, 2003, in the cafeteria of a Pembroke (near Ottawa) high school. Sabrina Shannon died from anaphylaxis by consuming fries served by tongs that had been cross-contaminated by dairy protein.

**Do other schools have allergy policies?**

Yes. Bill 3 (Sabrina’s Law) was passed in May 2005 and requires every public school board to establish and maintain an anaphylactic policy. The increasing prevalence of food allergies amongst children are changing the way schools function all across North America. There are estimated to be 40,000 anaphylactic students in Ontario public schools.

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## **Appendix A - Education Materials for Students**

### **Online Resources for Discussion and Activities**

- Arthur<sup>®</sup> Hooray for Health! - *Binky Goes Nuts* – Understanding Peanut Allergies - <http://pbskids.org/arthur/> (Go to “Parents & Teachers” section, click “Lesson Plans”, and then click “Hooray for Health.”)
- Anaphylaxis Canada – Safe4Kids - <http://www.safe4kids.ca/> - Downloadable lesson plans and activities for Kindergarten to Grade 10+ (click “Schools and Camps”)

### **Books**

- *No Nuts for Me* – by Aaron Zevy (ages 3-7)
- *No Nuts for Me* – online version - <http://www.foodallergyinitiative.org>
- *The Peanut Pickle* – by Jessica Ureel (ages 4-8)
- *Allie the Allergic Elephant* – by Nicole Smith (ages 4-8)
- *The Peanut Butter Jam* by Elizabeth Sussman Nassau (ages 4-8)

### **Video**

- *Alexander the Elephant Who Couldn't Eat Peanuts* (Time 9:53)
- *Friends Helping Friends: Make It Your Goal* (teens) (Time 17:00)

## **Appendix B- Deciphering Food Labels & Hidden Sources of Peanuts**

### **Some other names for “Peanuts”**

- ❖ Nu-Nuts™
- ❖ arachide
- ❖ monkey nuts
- ❖ beer nuts
- ❖ mandelonas - peanuts soaked in almond flavoring.
- ❖ cacahouète/cacahouette/cacahuète
- ❖ earth nuts
- ❖ goober nuts, goober peas
- ❖ ground nuts
- ❖ mixed nuts
- ❖ nut meats
- ❖ valencias
- ❖ arachis oil is peanut oil
- ❖ artificial nuts - can be peanuts that have been de-flavored and re-flavored with a nutty taste, such as pecan or walnut
- ❖ peanut flour
- ❖ cold pressed, expelled or extruded peanut oil
- ❖ natural and artificial flavors sometimes contain tree nuts
- ❖ hydrolyzed plant protein
- ❖ hydrolyzed protein
- ❖ hydrolyzed vegetable protein - source is usually soya or wheat, but can also be peanut.
- ❖ almond powder and chopped almonds - sometimes contain powdered or chopped peanuts as a filler

### **Some non-food sources of peanuts**

- ❖ soap
- ❖ sun screen
- ❖ cosmetics
- ❖ ant baits
- ❖ bird seed
- ❖ mouse traps
- ❖ pet food
- ❖ craft materials
- ❖ homemade playdough

## **Appendix C – How a Child Might Describe a Reaction**

Children have unique ways of describing their experiences and perceptions, including allergic reactions. Precious time is lost when adults do not immediately recognize that a reaction is occurring or don't understand what the children might be telling them. The following text contains examples of the words a child might use to describe a reaction.

In addition, know that sometimes children, especially very young ones, will put their hands in their mouths, or pull or scratch at their tongues, in response to a reaction. Also, children's voices may change (i.e., become hoarse or squeaky), and they may slur their words.

- ❖ This food's too spicy.
- ❖ My tongue is hot (or burning).
- ❖ It feels like something's poking my tongue.
- ❖ My tongue (or mouth) is tingling (or burning).
- ❖ My tongue (or mouth) itches.
- ❖ It (my tongue) feels like there is hair on it.
- ❖ My mouth feels funny.
- ❖ There's a frog in my throat.
- ❖ There's something stuck in my throat.
- ❖ My tongue feels full (or heavy).
- ❖ My lips feel tight.
- ❖ It feels like there are bugs in there (to describe itchy ears).
- ❖ It [my throat] feels thick.
- ❖ It feels like a bump is on the back of my tongue [throat].

Source: Food Allergy News, *Vol. 13, No. 2*. ©2003 *The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network*. All rights reserved.

**Information in this document was obtained from the following sources:**

*Anaphylaxis: A Handbook for School Boards* – Canadian School Boards Association

*Managing Life Threatening Food Allergies in Schools* – Massachusetts Department of Education

*Anaphylaxis Guidelines for Schools* – New South Wales Department of Education and Training

*Administrative and Operational Procedures* - Toronto District School Board

*Peanut allergies: A medico-legal perspective* – Joel Doctor, M.D., F.R.C.P.(C) Allergy and Clinical Immunology, The University of Calgary, Faculty of Medicine; and Eleanor Doctor, B.Ed., LL.B., Barrister and Solicitor

*Life threatening food allergies in school and child care settings: a practical resource for patients, care providers and staff* – British Columbia. Ministry for Children and Families

**Ontario Ministry of Education**

**Anaphylaxis Canada**

**Anaphylaxis Australia**

**Allergy Society of South Africa**

**The Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology**

**The Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology**

**Calgary Allergy Network**

**Canadian Food Inspection Agency**

**Food Allergy Initiative**

**Seattlefoodallergy.org**

**The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network**

**Allergic Living Magazine**