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December 2013

School Access to Epinephrine

New EpiPen Law Is In Effect to Help Protect Children with Asthma and Allergies

On November 13, 2013, the ***School Access to Emergency Epinephrine Act*** was signed into law. It encourages states to adopt laws requiring schools to have epinephrine auto-injectors on hand at all times. It also provides an incentive for states to enact their own laws allowing school personnel to keep and administer epinephrine. Additionally, a student will be able to get the medication even if there is no prescription for that child. As part of the Act, each school will need to develop a plan for ensuring trained personnel are available to administer epinephrine during all hours of the school day.

Why is this important?

Nearly 6,000,000 of children in the United States have food allergies and 9.5% suffer from asthma. The incidence of food allergies has been on the rise and, yet, most schools don't have the medicine (epinephrine) on hand. In recent years, two children died after ingesting peanuts, suffering an anaphylactic reaction while at school. Last year a 7-year old girl died after eating a peanut on a playground. In 2010, a 13-year old girl died after eating food that contained peanut oil. [1]

- Anaphylaxis, or anaphylactic shock, is a systemic allergic reaction that can be unpredictable and that can kill within minutes.
- More than 15 percent of school-aged children with food allergies have had an allergic reaction in school.
- Teenagers and young adults with food allergies are at the highest risk of fatal food-induced anaphylaxis.
- Individuals with food allergies who also have asthma may be at increased risk for severe or fatal food allergy reactions.
- Studies have shown that 25 percent of epinephrine administrations in schools involve individuals with a previously unknown allergy.

- The cause of allergic reactions (*e.g. severe swelling, breathing problems and loss of blood pressure*) can be from an insect bite or sting, food, medicine, allergic injections, or even exercise and from unknown causes.
- The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) have reported that delays in the administration of epinephrine to patients in anaphylaxis can result in rapid decline and death. NIAID recommends that epinephrine be given promptly to treat anaphylaxis.

Note that physicians can provide standing orders to furnish a school with epinephrine for injection, and several States have passed laws to authorize this practice.

[1]Peanut allergies have more than tripled - Study, Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, 2010

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology recommends that epinephrine injectors should be included in all emergency medical treatment kits in schools. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that an anaphylaxis kit should be kept with medications in each school and made available to trained staff for administration in an emergency. According to the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network, there are no contraindications to the use of epinephrine for a life-threatening reaction.



Grant Monies Available

States that require schools to maintain a supply of the medication and permit trained school personnel to administer it will get preference for receiving federal children's asthma-treatment grants. A similar preference has been in effect since 2004 for allowing students to self-administer medication for allergic anaphylaxis.

Liability Protection

States' Attorneys General are required to certify that their state has reviewed any applicable civil liability protection laws and has concluded it provides protection "to such trained personnel" who administer the medication.

Status of Your State

About 30 states have introduced or are close to introducing legislation allowing schools to stock undesignated epinephrine auto-injectors. About 20 states have already passed such laws. Refer to the following for an update: http://www.nasbe.org/healthy_schools/hs/bytopics.php?topicid=4110

References

Congress. gov: <http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th/house-bill/2094/text>

Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE): <http://www.foodallergy.org/>

House Bill HR 2094: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CRPT-113hrpt182/html/CRPT-113hrpt182.htm>

NBC News: <http://www.nbcnews.com/health/bill-combat-allergy-emergencies-schools-signed-obama-2D11591432>

The White House Blog: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/11/13/president-obama-signs-new-epipen-law-protect-children-asthma-and-severe-allergies-an>



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