Anaphylaxis

Introductory information

Anaphylaxis is a severe and sometimes sudden allergic reaction. It can occur when a susceptible person is exposed to an allergen (such as a food or an insect sting). Reactions usually begin within minutes of exposure and can progress rapidly over a period of up to two hours or more. Anaphylaxis is potentially life threatening and always requires an emergency response.

You should be aware of any students in your class at risk of anaphylaxis. It is important that students at risk get to experience all of the positive things about school and are not excluded from activities or events.

Some students may be self-conscious about their condition and may not like to be singed out or have a fuss made about them in front of their peers. This is easily accommodated within our school settings by thinking about student’s learning and support needs during the planning process and making adjustments to class and school activities.

Sample activities have been designed to increase student’s knowledge and understanding of anaphylaxis as a medical condition that affects young people.

1. Getting to know anaphylaxis
2. Food allergy scenarios
3. Unsafe scenarios

Syllabus links

The activities link to the Stage 4 PDHPE outcomes and content.

Outcome 4.6: describes the nature of health and analyses how health issues may impact on young people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students learn about</th>
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| • factors that affect health  
  - medical conditions | • identify signs, symptoms and risk factors for health conditions for young people |

Outcome 4.7: identifies the consequences of risk behaviours and describes strategies to minimise harm

<table>
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  - settings or circumstances where risk taking occurs  
  - factors influencing risk taking  
  - outcomes of risk behaviour | • explore the concept of risk by investigating the following:  
  - what is a reasonable degree of risk?  
  - why do people take risks? |
**strategies to minimise harm**
- acquiring knowledge
- safe attitudes
- developing personal skills
- safe and supportive environments
- recognising, assessing and responding to risk situations.

**describe strategies to minimise harm in real life situations.**
- recognise potentially unsafe situations and respond by demonstrating personal skills
- demonstrate management of basic first aid situations.

**personal safety**
- strategies to keep safe
- emergency assessment
- basic first aid procedures
- seeking further assistance

**evaluate when it is appropriate to seek assistance from others.**

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**Outcome 4.11 selects and uses communication skills and strategies clearly and coherently in a range of new and challenging situations**

**Outcome 4.12 assesses risk and social influences and reflects on personal experience to make informed decisions**

These activities could be included in units of work exploring health issues that affect young people, first aid, emergency care or harm minimisation.

When teaching about anaphylaxis, consider student sensitivities around this issue. It may be useful to talk to students with allergies before presenting the teaching and learning activities to gauge their reaction. It is not appropriate to refer to individual students who have allergies without first gaining their permission. Some students may wish to contribute personal stories to support the teaching and learning in the classroom, other students may not wish their condition to be disclosed to the class.

It is important to notify and discuss the implementation of these curriculum materials with the parents of students diagnosed as being at risk of anaphylaxis. Teachers need to be aware not only of diagnosed students in the class but also the potential for students to have family members and close friends at risk of anaphylaxis.

Teachers also need to be sensitive towards the provision of information about allergies, especially if it involves the identification of students who suffer from allergies, in such a way to ensure there is not increased risk of bullying or discrimination.

You should be aware of any students in your class at risk of anaphylaxis. It is important that students at risk get to experience all of the positive things about school and are not excluded from activities or events. Some students may be self-conscious about their condition and may not like to be singled out or have a fuss made about them in front of their peers. This is easily accommodated within our school settings by thinking about student needs during the planning process and making adjustments behind the scenes to class and school activities.

The [Anaphylaxis Procedures for Schools](#) have been developed to assist school staff to support students at risk of an anaphylactic reaction. The procedures are designed for use in all NSW government schools, including their preschools. For more information, go to the [Student Health section of the Department’s website](#).
Getting to know anaphylaxis – Stage 4

This activity uses the jigsaw learning strategy as a way of exploring anaphylaxis as a medical condition that affects young people. Students learn to identify the causes, signs, symptoms and risk factors for an anaphylactic reaction and learn about strategies to minimise the risk of an anaphylaxis.

Teacher note: Anaphylaxis is a severe and sometimes sudden allergic reaction. It can occur when a susceptible person is exposed to an allergen (such as a food or an insect sting). Reactions usually begin within minutes of exposure and can progress rapidly over a period of up to two hours or more. Anaphylaxis is potentially life threatening and always requires an emergency response. The following activities have been designed to increase student’s knowledge and understanding of anaphylaxis as a medical condition that affects young people.

Central concepts – What do we want students to learn?

| Understand the nature and causes of anaphylaxis |
| Identify signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis |
| Identify common risk factors for an anaphylactic reaction |
| Outline strategies to reduce the risk of an anaphylactic reaction |
| Understand what actions to take if they see someone having an anaphylactic reaction |

Why does this learning matter?

- Students need to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to minimise risk associated with exposure to allergens.
- Students need the necessary knowledge and skills to support and protect themselves and others.

Evidence of learning

Students can:

- Identify the nature and causes of anaphylaxis
- Identify signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis
- Identify common risk factors for an anaphylactic reaction
- Outline strategies to reduce the risk of an anaphylactic reaction
- Explain what actions to take if they see someone having an anaphylactic reaction.
### Syllabus content

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Lesson 1- Getting to know anaphylaxis

Use the jigsaw learning strategy as a way of exploring anaphylaxis as a medical condition that affects young people.

Students learn to identify the causes, signs, symptoms and risk factors for an anaphylactic reaction and learn about strategies to minimise the risk of anaphylaxis.

- Students are placed into home groups of four. These are home groups.
  - Each group member is given a different fact card on anaphylaxis.
  - Group members then join with members of other groups assigned the same piece of information. These are expert groups.
  - Expert groups are given time to read and discuss the information.
  - Experts record five key points from their fact card to share with their home group.
  - Students return to their home groups and share their information on anaphylaxis.

Follow up activities may include:

- Design a poster to help raise awareness of anaphylaxis that covers the information gathered over the lesson. Posters can then be displayed around the school.
- Design a presentation that could be shown at an assembly during Food Allergy Week
- In groups, create an anaphylaxis awareness video or multimedia production shown as part of a year or school assembly.
- Create a brochure or newsletter article to be distributed to the school community and made available for reading in the office or library.

Teacher background information

It is important to inform students that the school has agreed procedures in place for responding to anaphylaxis and staff trained to administer an adrenaline autoinjector [1].

In addition, it is the staff rather than the student’s responsibility to respond in an emergency (give the adrenaline autoinjector and call an ambulance) though students can ring an ambulance if no adult is around.

Students can help by alerting a teacher or adult if they suspect someone is having an anaphylactic reaction. For advice on anaphylaxis in NSW schools, go to the Anaphylaxis Procedures for Schools - 2012.

Teachers should also be aware of the risk minimisation strategies that are in place for students and the school environment and procedures in their school for responding to anaphylaxis.

All teachers and administration staff should be trained and able to provide an emergency response. Students should be able to call on any member of staff for help. For more information on anaphylaxis, visit the Australasian society of clinical immunology and allergy website or Allergy and Anaphylaxis Australia.

[1] Adrenaline autoinjector refers to EpiPen® or AnaPen. A junior device is available in each brand for small children (who weigh between 10 and 20kg).
Fact card: What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe and sudden allergic reaction and is potentially life threatening. It occurs when a person is exposed to an allergen (such as a food or insect bite). This allergen triggers a reaction in the body.

Anaphylaxis is a generalised allergic reaction, which often involves more than one body system (e.g. skin, respiratory, gastro-intestinal and cardiovascular).

A severe allergic reaction usually occurs within minutes of exposure to the trigger and can rapidly become life threatening. An anaphylactic reaction always requires an emergency response.

The severity of an anaphylactic reaction can be influenced by a number of factors including exercise, hot weather and in the case of food allergens, the amount eaten.

In the case of severe food allergies, an anaphylactic reaction is usually triggered by ingestion of the food.

Common allergens that can trigger anaphylaxis are:

**Food**

Milk, eggs, peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, fish, shellfish and soy are the most common food triggers, which cause 90% of allergic reactions. However, any food can trigger anaphylaxis. It is important to understand that even trace amounts of food can cause a life-threatening reaction.

**Insect venom**

Bee, wasp and jumper ant stings are the most common causes of anaphylaxis to insect stings. Ticks and fire ants also cause anaphylaxis in susceptible individuals.

**Medication**

Medications such as aspirin and penicillin can cause life threatening allergic reactions. Individuals can also have anaphylactic reactions to herbal or ‘alternative’ medicines.

**Latex**

Natural latex comes from a liquid in tropical rubber trees. It is processed to make many rubber products such as rubber gloves, rubber bands, balloons, condoms and swimming caps. A latex allergy can be triggered from contact with the latex product or from airbourne latex particles attached to the powder found in rubber gloves or swimming caps.
Fact card: Signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis

Signs and symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction usually occur within minutes of exposure to the allergen. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and even life threatening.

It is important to closely monitor anyone who may be having an allergic reaction to determine whether the reaction is mild or more severe.

Mild to moderate reaction

A mild to moderate reaction may cause symptoms such as:
- swelling of the lips, face and eyes
- hives or welts
- tingling mouth
- abdominal pain and vomiting (these are signs of a severe allergic reaction to insects).

If someone is suffering from a moderate reaction the following actions should be taken.

For insect allergy, flick out sting if visible. Do not remove ticks

1. Stay with person and call for help
2. Locate an appropriate person to administer medications (if prescribed)
1. Locate an adrenaline autoinjector (EpiPen or Anapen. A junior device is available in each brand for small children between 10-20kg).
3. Contact parent/carer.

Severe reaction

A severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) may cause symptoms such as:
- difficult/noisy breathing
- swelling of tongue
- swelling/tightness in throat
- difficulty talking and/or hoarse voice
- wheeze or persistent cough
- persistent dizziness or collapse
- pale and floppy (young children)

If someone is suffering from a severe reaction the following actions should be taken.

1. Lay person flat, do not stand or walk. If breathing is difficult allow to sit
2. Give adrenaline autoinjector noting the time the medication was administered (EpiPen or Anapen. A junior device is available in each brand for small children between 10-20kg).
3. Call ambulance (Telephone 000) and if practicable stay in the line of sight of the person so that you can relay information to the operator.
4. Contact parent/caregiver
5. Further adrenaline doses may be given if no response after 5 minutes (if another adrenaline autoinjector is available)

**Note:** Those diagnosed with severe allergy must carry emergency medication as prescribed as well as an Anaphylaxis Action Plan signed by their doctor. For school students, schools will have a central storage place for adrenaline autoinjectors and student anaphylaxis action plans with diagnosed severe allergies. Older students may also carry their adrenaline autoinjector with them. Schools will also maintain a general use auto injector as part of their first aid kits in order to respond in the event of an emergency.

**Note:** This information is consistent with ASCIA emergency response plan at time of publishing 2012. Check at [www.allergy.org.au](http://www.allergy.org.au) for updated guidelines.
Fact card: Risk factors

Food

Ingestion: An anaphylactic reaction is usually triggered by ingestion of the food. For people with a known severe allergy, prevention is the key. The only sure way to prevent a potentially serious reaction to a known allergen is to avoid exposure to the allergen, for example, only eating food from known sources and checking the labels of foods for ingredients before eating. Sharing food with friends can be risky, particularly if the ingredients in the food are not known.

The severity of an anaphylactic reaction can be influenced by a number of factors including minor illness, asthma, and, in the case of food allergens, the amount eaten. In the case of severe food allergies, an anaphylactic reaction is usually triggered by ingestion of the food.

Contact skin reactions to an allergen are very unlikely to trigger anaphylaxis, however they can cause mild to moderate reactions in some people. It should be noted that a food allergen can be spread by:

Touch: traces of food can be found on people’s hands, face and lips as well as their eating and drinking utensils. Holding hands, kissing and sharing utensils with someone who has ingested or touched the food a student is allergic to can cause a reaction.

Smell: inhaling the smell of a food allergen such as fish, can cause an allergic reaction. Need to check whether occurrence of anaphylactic reactions is the same from smell as opposed to reactions from breathing in airborne food particles.

Insect bites

Grassed areas and garden areas place students with an allergy to insect bites at increased risk of a reaction. Sitting or playing in areas where trees are flowering can be risky due to the number of bees and other insects that can be attracted to the blossoms.

Medication

Use of unprescribed medication by a student or sharing medication with other students can increase the risk of an anaphylactic reaction at school. It is important that medication is only taken by the person who it has been prescribed for.

Latex

Students with an allergy to latex can be placed at risk of an anaphylactic reaction if:

- classmates use latex swimming caps in aquatic lessons or sport
- latex gloves are used in lessons such as science leading to airbourne latex particles in the classroom
- latex condoms are used in a lesson on contraception as part of sexual health education in Personal Development, Health and Physical Education
- students bring latex balloons to school for birthdays and other special events.
Fact card: Strategies to minimise risk of anaphylaxis at school

Taking precautionary measures at school will reduce the likelihood of a student having an anaphylactic reaction. Schools and individuals have a responsibility to put strategies in place to minimise the potential harm to students with anaphylaxis.

Some strategies to minimise risk at school are listed below.

**Food (ingestion)**

Schools can:

- educate the school community about anaphylaxis and common allergens
- inform other class members’ parents of the trigger substances
- inform canteen staff of students with allergy and the nature of their allergy
- identify foods in the canteen that are likely to contain trigger substances and replace with suitable alternatives and/or clearly label food items on the menu.

Individuals can:

- encourage friends not to eat trigger foods around the allergic student
- avoid sharing food with other students
- avoid sharing eating or drinking utensils with other students
- always wash hands before and after touching food
- always get help from a teacher or other adult if another student looks unwell, even if they do not know what is wrong with them
- avoid pressuring allergic students to try new food or food they are allergic to

**Food (touch or smell)**

The occurrence of a severe reaction from touch or smell from food is rare but it is important to be aware that it can happen. The reaction from smell may appear similar to a reaction from breath in airborne particles of food.

Individuals can:

- reduce the risk of allergen transmission by touch significantly by hand washing
- students should tell a teacher as soon as possible so that they can get help if they believe that one of their friends is not feeling well.
Insect bites

Schools can:
- identify low risk play areas for students with allergies to insect bites
- decrease number of plants in the school that attract bees
- ensure students wear closed in shoes at all times.

Individuals can:
- avoid sitting or playing in areas with flowering plants.

Medication

Schools can:
- educate students about medication allergies and the importance of only taking medication prescribed to them
- encourage affected students to wear medic alert bracelets.

Individuals can:
- only take medication prescribed to them.

Latex

Schools can:
- avoid the use of party balloons and other latex products at school

Individuals can:
- avoid contact with swimming caps, latex gloves and other latex products during school activities.
Food allergy scenarios – Stage 4

Through the use of scenarios, students acquire the knowledge and personal skills to assess the risk of food products to young people who are at risk of anaphylaxis. Students develop strategies to identify risks and minimise the potential harm in a range of settings common to young people.

Teacher note: Anaphylaxis is a severe and sometimes sudden allergic reaction. It can occur when a susceptible person is exposed to an allergen (such as a food or an insect sting). Reactions usually begin within minutes of exposure and can progress rapidly over a period of up to two hours or more. Anaphylaxis is potentially life threatening and always requires an emergency response. The following activities have been designed to increase student’s knowledge and understanding of anaphylaxis as a medical condition that affects young people.

Central concepts – What do we want students to learn?

- Analyse food labels to determine what foods are safe and unsafe
- Analyse recipes to determine what recipes are safe and unsafe
- Identify situations where a person with anaphylaxis would need to know the ingredients of a recipe
- Recognise implications for families, peers and schools and outline strategies to minimise harm

Why does this learning matter?

- Students need to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to minimise risk associated with exposure to allergens.
- Students need the necessary knowledge and skills to support and protect themselves and others.

Evidence of learning

Students can:

- Identify what makes foods safe and unsafe
- Read a recipe and determine what recipes are safe and unsafe
- Identify situations where a person with anaphylaxis would need to know the ingredients of a recipe.
- Outline strategies to reduce the risk of an anaphylactic reaction
- Explain what actions to take if they see someone having an anaphylactic reaction.
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Lesson 2 - Food allergy scenarios

When interpreting food labels and looking for allergens on ingredient list it is important to note that the ‘may contain’ statement is voluntary information provided by the manufacturer in order to inform the consumer that the product may have been inadvertently contaminated during the manufacturing process. It does not necessarily mean that the product will contain the allergen (this information is on the ingredient list). Some children who are at risk of anaphylaxis eat the products that have the ‘may contain’ statement while others do not.

Students analyse food labels to determine whether the food product is suitable for a person with a food allergy.

- Introduce the task by discussing the following questions as a class:
  - Where do you find the ingredients listed on food labels?
  - If you had any questions about the ingredients in the food product, how could you find out more information?
  - What other information on the packages may be helpful to a person with a food allergy?

Students work in pairs with one scenario card per pair. It is important to make it explicit that the young people’s allergies mentioned in the scenarios are severe and if they were to consume the food it would trigger anaphylaxis.

- Students consider the following questions in relation to the scenario they have been allocated.
  - What types of food contain your food allergen?
  - What types of food do you consider to be safe?
  - What types of food do you consider to be unsafe?

Model the process for determining level of risk for a selected scenario with one food label.

- Students work in pairs to analyse food package labels (or photocopies).
- Read the allocated food label and determine whether the product is safe or unsafe based on the information provided in their scenario. Rotate labels between pairs every 30 seconds.

Discuss the following questions with the class:

- What type of products contained your food allergen?
- What type of products did you consider to be safe? Why are they safe?
- Why types of food products do you consider high risk and unsafe?
- What alternatives are available as substitutes for a person who is allergic to these products?
- Are products that state “may contain” certain ingredients safe for a person with a food allergy? Why/why not?
Why should a person with a food allergy read labels before they consume the product, regardless of whether they have eaten it in the past?
Students analyse recipes to determine whether the meal is suitable for a person with a food allergy.

- Display a range of recipes around the room (source from cookbook or internet dishes such as pasta carbonara, moussaka, chinese sesame noodles, fish cakes, satay chicken skewers and caesar salad).
- Pairs read through each recipe to determine whether it would be suitable for the person described in their allocated scenario.
- Review and discuss the following questions:
  - How many people?
  - What dishes were most suitable to your person? Why?
  - What dishes were least suitable to your person? Why?
  - Could any of the recipes be modified to suit your person? How?

Students consider the implications of anaphylaxis for family members, friends and schools.

- Students work in groups of four.
- Distribute a placemat proforma to each group. The placemat has four settings; the school playground, the school canteen, at home and at a party.
- Groups brainstorm ways they could support a friend or family member with anaphylaxis to reduce the risk of an anaphylactic reaction in each setting.
- Each member of the group starts with a corner of the placemat and records their ideas on the placemat in the box facing them.
- Once students have had time to record their ideas, rotate the placemat so students have the chance to record ideas in each of the four corners.
- Ask groups to report their ideas back to the class.

Teacher background information

For examples on how schools can reduce the risk, refer to the [Anaphylaxis Procedures for NSW Schools](https://www.education.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/65048/Anaphylaxis-Policies-and-Procedures.pdf).
<table>
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Unsafe scenarios – Stage 4

Through the use of scenarios, students learn to identify risks associated with anaphylactic reactions, factors influencing risk taking and strategies to minimise the risk of an anaphylactic reaction occurring. Students learn to identify when a situation may become unsafe and determine when it is appropriate to seek help. Students also develop plans for the management of an emergency situation.

**Teacher note:** Anaphylaxis is a severe and sometimes sudden allergic reaction. It can occur when a susceptible person is exposed to an allergen (such as a food or an insect sting). Reactions usually begin within minutes of exposure and can progress rapidly over a period of up to two hours or more. Anaphylaxis is potentially life threatening and always requires an emergency response. The following activities have been designed to increase student’s knowledge and understanding of anaphylaxis as a medical condition that affects young people.

**Central concepts – What do we want students to learn?**

- Identify potentially unsafe situations for people with anaphylaxis.
- Identify factors influencing risk taking.
- Describe strategies to reduce the risk of an anaphylactic reaction in a given scenario.
- Identify signs and symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction.
- Recognise an emergency situation and the appropriate management of the situation.

**Why does this learning matter?**

- Students need to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to minimise risk associated with exposure to allergens.
- Students need the necessary knowledge and skills to support and protect themselves and others.

**Evidence of learning**

Students can:

- Identify potentially unsafe situations for people with anaphylaxis.
- Identify factors influencing risk taking.
- Describe strategies to reduce the risk of an anaphylactic reaction in a given scenario.
- Identify signs and symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction.
- Recognise an emergency situation and the appropriate management of the situation.
- Explain what actions to take if they see someone having an anaphylactic reaction.
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Lesson 3 - Unsafe scenarios

Students explore the scenario cards in small groups.

- Divide students into small groups.
- Distribute one scenario to each group. Each group reads through the scenario and completes the following questions.
  - Why is the situation potentially unsafe?
  - Identify the personal and social influences that have led to this situation.
  - Describe strategies that the person with the allergy and the friends of the person with the allergy could use to reduce the risk of an anaphylactic reaction in this situation.
  - How would you know if the person was having an anaphylactic reaction?
  - When would you seek assistance from others?
  - Who would you seek assistance from?
  - What could you do to manage the situation until help arrives?

- Each group shares their scenario and reports back to the class their responses to questions.
### Unsafe scenario cards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 1</th>
<th>Scenario 2</th>
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<td>Carlo is allergic to milk, peanuts, tree nuts and shellfish. Carlo has just changed schools because he was picked on at his last school about his food allergies. Students use to tease him daily because he could not eat many of the foods they could eat. Carlo has decided that he won’t tell anyone at his new school about his food allergies.</td>
<td>Angie is allergic to peanuts. She gets annoyed that she can’t eat products like chocolate bars and cookies because it “may have traces of nuts”. She is on a school camp in the National Park when a friend offers her a snack size chocolate bar and tells her it doesn’t have nuts in it.</td>
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<td>Zach is allergic to peanuts, sesame seeds and wheat. He is the captain of his school soccer team. In two weeks Zach’s team is going on an overseas tour to several countries in Europe. His mum is apprehensive about him going on the tour because she is concerned about how he is going to deal with his allergies. Zach is worried too, but does not want to miss out on this opportunity.</td>
<td>Phillipa is allergic to peanuts. Phillipa is in Year 9 and is very careful about checking the ingredients in the food she eats. Her dance elective class has been invited to a sit down luncheon prepared by the food technology elective class. Everyone in her class has been really excited about the luncheon, including Phillipa. The food technology teacher is aware of Phillipa’s allergy and has advised Phillipa that nothing on the menu will contain peanuts. On the day of the luncheon a substitute teacher supervises the making of the luncheon.</td>
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<td>Priyanka is 16 years old and allergic to wheat. Her mum buys her wheat free bread for her sandwiches for lunch and bakes wheat free muffins and cakes for treats. At home for dinner, her mum cooks Indian food which does not contain wheat. Priyanka is staying over at a friend’s place for a “study” night. Her mum is worried about the food Priyanka will be given for dinner and lunch but Priyanka has assured her mum that her friend knows about her wheat allergy.</td>
<td>Bryce is in Year 7 and is allergic to sesame seeds. He had an allergic reaction to a sesame seed bar when he was little but has not been exposed to sesame seeds since. His class is on a day excursion to Taronga Zoo and have been supplied with lunch. The rolls the students have been given are covered in sesame seeds. One roll without seeds has been labelled with Bryce’s name on it. A student from Bryce’s year has deliberately taken that roll and began to eat it. Bryce decides not to tell the teacher and takes a sesame seed roll. He is worried what might happen, but is hungry and doesn’t want to draw attention to his allergy.</td>
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<td>Rosie is allergic to peanuts, tree nuts, and soy. She is in Year 11 and her friends always want her to go out to dinner with them. Rosie has always said no because she thinks it is easier to avoid the embarrassment of having to check the menu and talk with the cook before she eats anything.</td>
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