



# Food Allergies

In the School Setting

# Food Allergy Basics



# Food Allergy Basics

- ◆ The role of the immune system is to protect the body from germs and disease
- ◆ A food allergy is an abnormal response by the immune system to a food protein
- ◆ When the food is eaten, the immune system thinks the food is harmful and releases histamine and other chemicals to “attack” the enemy



# Food Allergy Basics

- ◆ There is no cure for food allergy
- ◆ Complete and strict avoidance of the food is the only way to prevent a reaction



# Food Allergy Basics

Eight foods cause 90% of the allergic reactions in the United States:

- ◆ Milk
- ◆ Peanuts
- ◆ Eggs
- ◆ Tree Nuts (e.g., walnuts, pecans, etc.)
- ◆ Wheat
- ◆ Fish
- ◆ Soy
- ◆ Shellfish

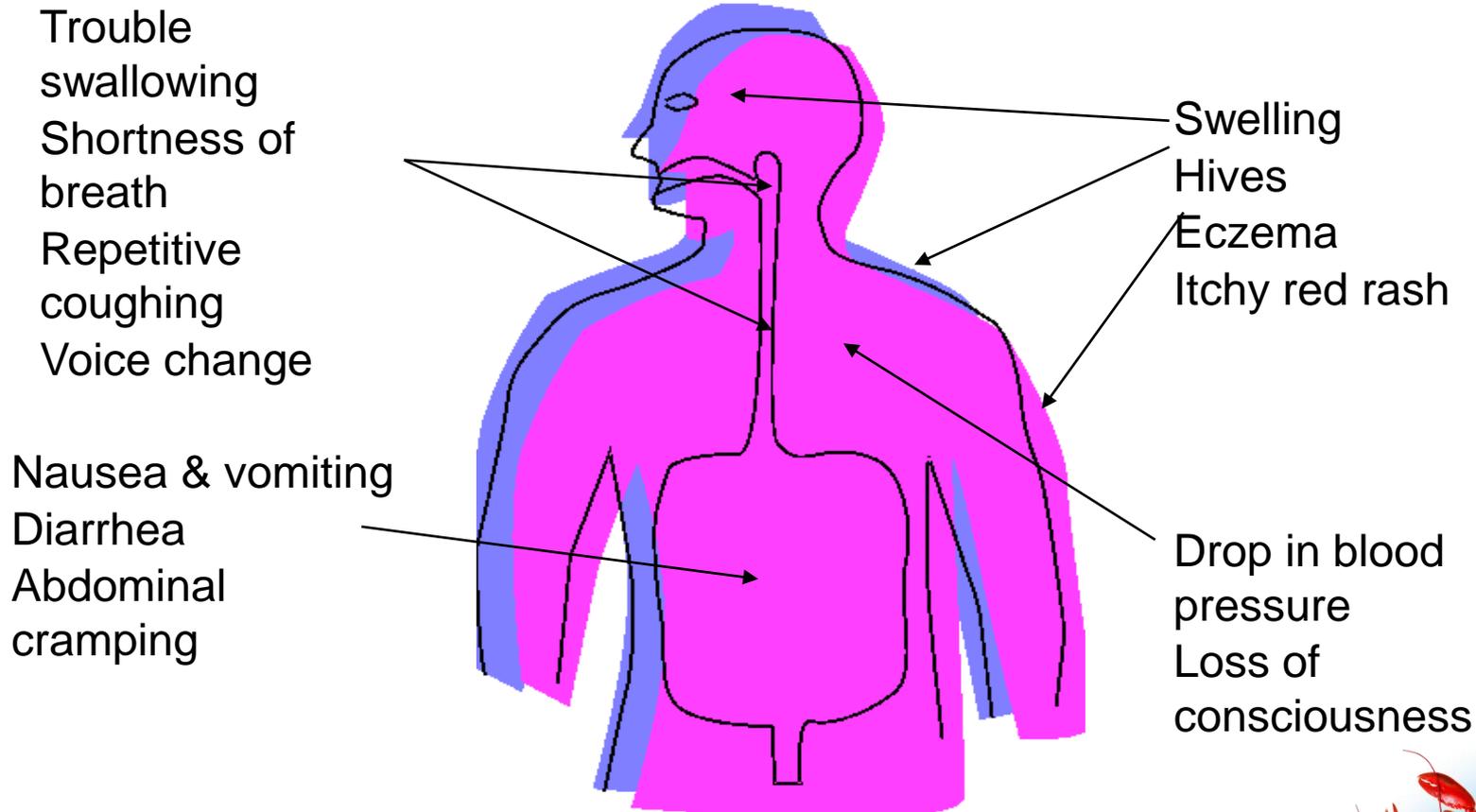


# Food Allergy Facts

- ◆ 4% of U.S. population or 12 million Americans (1 in 25) have a food allergy
- ◆ Children are the largest group affected
  - 4 to 6% of children have a food allergy
  - Growing problem...peanut allergy doubled in children over a five-year period (1997 – 2002)



# Symptoms – one or more may occur shortly after eating



# Anaphylaxis

- ◆ A serious allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death
- ◆ Each year in the U.S. anaphylaxis to food causes an estimated 50,000 to 125,000 emergency room visits, depending on the source
- ◆ Individuals with food allergy plus asthma are at greatest risk for a serious reaction



# Epinephrine (adrenaline)

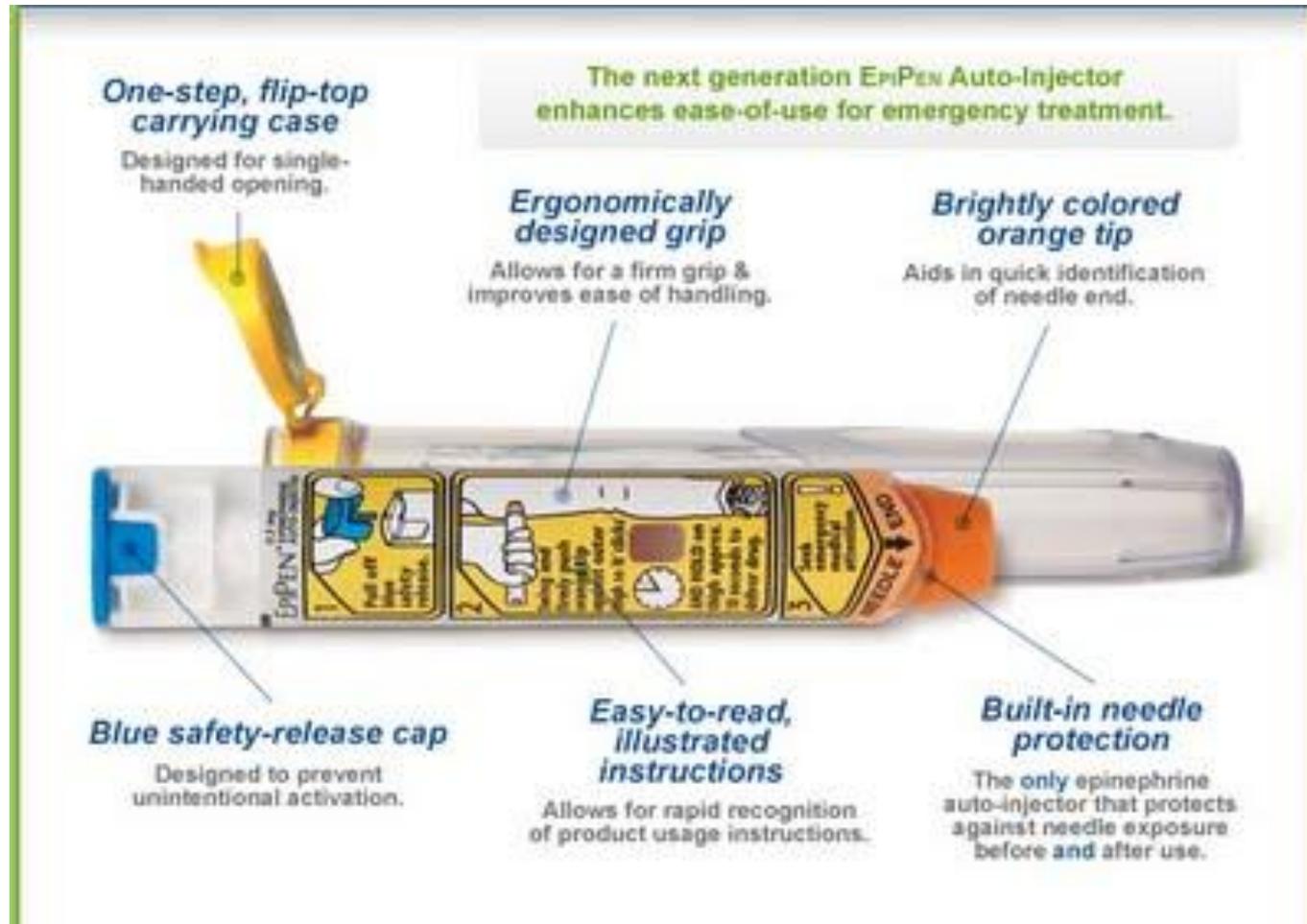
- ◆ Prompt administration of epinephrine is key to surviving anaphylaxis
- ◆ Prescribed as auto-injectors (such as EpiPen<sup>®</sup> or Twinject<sup>®</sup>)



# Other Different types of EPIPENS



# Parts of an EPIPEN



# Managing Food Allergies Day to Day



# Basic Principles

- ◆ Totally avoid food allergens
  - Wise food choices through vigilant label reading and asking questions
  - Careful food preparation and cleanup
- ◆ Be prepared in case of a reaction



# Vigilant Label Reading

- ◆ Read every label every time
  - Formulations can change without warning
- ◆ Don't rely on "safe lists"
- ◆ Allergens can be in non-food items
  - Soaps, shampoos, skin products, medications, pet foods



# Careful Food Preparation

Wash hands, cooking utensils, and food preparation surfaces to avoid reactions from trace amounts of proteins left behind.

- ◆ Liquid soap, bar soap, or commercial wipes for hands, not antibacterial gel sanitizers
- ◆ Dishwashing detergent and hot water for cooking utensils and cutting boards
- ◆ Common household cleaners for counters, tables, and other surfaces



# Be Prepared for an Allergic Reaction

- ◆ Accidents are never planned
- ◆ Keys to being prepared:
  - Medications must be immediately available **at all times**
  - Knowing how to recognize symptoms and administer medications quickly
  - A written Food Allergy Action Plan



# If a Reaction Occurs

**Activate the Food Allergy Action Plan  
Immediately!**

*R*ecognize the symptoms

*R*eact quickly

*R*eview what caused the reaction and how well the  
action plan worked



# Managing Food Allergies in Schools



# Food Allergy in Schools

- ◆ Affects about 2 million school-age children
- ◆ Up to 25% of peanut/tree nut reactions in schools are first-time reactions
- ◆ Most reactions in schools occur from food in the classroom used for projects or celebrations



# Food Allergy in Schools

- ◆ Once a reaction begins, there is no way to know how severe it will become
- ◆ Take all food allergy-induced allergic reactions seriously
- ◆ Every school should have a plan for managing food allergies



# The Food Allergy Plan

The plan to manage a student's food allergies should take into account:

- ◆ Unique needs of the child
- ◆ School environment (size, staff, etc.)
- ◆ Goal of equal participation in all school-related activities



# The Food Allergy Plan

Developing the plan is a team effort involving:

- ◆ School staff
- ◆ Child's family (parents/guardians)
- ◆ Child's physician
- ◆ The child who has allergies, as age-appropriate



# School's Responsibility

- ◆ Create an environment where children, including those with food allergies, will be safe
- ◆ Employ prevention and avoidance strategies
- ◆ Be prepared to handle an allergic reaction
- ◆ Address teasing



# Family's Responsibility

- ◆ Provide written medical documentation
- ◆ Work with the school to develop a plan
- ◆ Provide properly labeled medications and replace after use or when expired
- ◆ Keep emergency contact information up-to-date
- ◆ Teach the child age-appropriate self-management skills



# Strategies to Minimize Risk of Reactions

- ◆ Clean hands before and after eating or handling food
- ◆ Plan for safe parties/celebrations
- ◆ Avoid using foods in classroom art/craft projects or as incentives
- ◆ Prohibit food trading and sharing



# Key Points for Schools

- ◆ Reactions can occur anywhere in school
- ◆ Early recognition and treatment of anaphylaxis is imperative and life-saving
- ◆ Education of all staff is important



# Free Downloads From FAAN

## [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

- ◆ Food Allergy Action Plan
- ◆ School Guidelines for Managing Students With Food Allergies
- ◆ Information Sheets
  - ◆ How to Read a Label, Facts and Statistics
- ◆ Be A PAL: Protect A Life From Food Allergies™
- ◆ Posters





# For More Information

(800) 929-4040

[www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)