



Cranberry Harbors Roundtable May 2020 Safety Moment: Allergies

Allergies are an issue that Scout and Scouter have to pay attention to every day.

Allergens come from many sources including various plant pollens, specific foods, mold spores, pet dander, medications, latex and insect stings. Allergic reactions range from mild and maybe annoying to serious and maybe deadly. Some of these allergens may become an issue while we are scouting. We as Scouts should be communicating our allergies via our up-to-date BSA Medical Form (see <https://www.scouting.org/health-and-safety/ahmr/> for more information). We do this in case of an accidental exposure that result in an emergency situation.

Insect Bites and Stings

Insect bites and stings are one of the most common cause of allergic reactions. Most individuals respond to an insect bite and stings with redness or minor swelling in the affected area. Some individuals will have a much more severe reaction that is called anaphylaxis that can be life threatening. Anaphylaxis is a “whole-body” allergic reaction that can impair breathing, cause dramatic drops in blood pressure and affect heart rates.

According to the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology, the five insects most likely to cause an allergic reaction in the US are: yellow jackets, honey bees, paper wasps, hornets, and fire ants.

The best practice when dealing with these insects is to avoid them whenever possible. If scouting outdoors, be vigilant for any possible nests or related insect activity. It is strongly recommended to wear clothing that covers the majority of the skin to shield against attack. Most importantly, it is important to have an easily accessible EPI Pen if you or one of your scouts are at risk for a severe allergic reaction due to insect stings.

Food Allergies

According to the Allergy and Asthma Foundation of America, annually an average of 200,000 emergency room visits are due to food allergies. Of these, almost 10,000 patients need to stay overnight. Some of the most common food allergies are milk, peanuts, tree nuts, soybeans, shellfish, fish, and eggs.

The best way to reduce the chances of an allergic reaction due to food is to know what the trigger allergen is and to avoid foods that contain the same. Some individuals will have extreme sensitivities, to the extent that if their food is sharing the same refrigerator space as the source of their allergen, they could experience a reaction. It is important that the people around you be aware of any food allergies that causes a severe allergic reaction so they can help prevent cross contamination. Those with severe allergies should have an EPI Pen accessible.

Summary

We as Scouts and Scouters are fortunate that we have a tool to communicate any allergens to those we spend our time with. Proper and immediate treatment is crucial for those suffering from a severe allergic reaction. Anaphylaxis requires immediate medical treatment, including an injection of epinephrine and a trip to a hospital emergency room. If not treated properly, anaphylaxis can be fatal.