

Blackheath Conservatoire

Policy, Guidance and Procedure on Allergies

Introduction

The Blackheath Conservatoire is committed to reducing the risk to our school community from allergens which could lead to a serious allergic reaction. This policy applies to all members of our community, including staff, tutors, students, volunteers, suppliers and any other stakeholder.

This policy is made available to the public on our website and is reviewed at least annually.

Statement

The Conservatoire takes all reasonable measures to minimise the risk of exposure to antigens for students, staff and visitors. We risk-assess activities, plan effective responses to possible emergencies and encourage self-responsibility and self-management by affected students, parents and visitors. However, the Conservatoire cannot guarantee a completely allergen-free environment on any part of the site or any other building which may, on occasion, be used.

The parent/guardian has final responsibility for the assessment of appropriateness and safety of activities and premises for their child.

Policy Objectives

- To promote awareness of the nature of allergens, in particular food allergens, and bring these to the attention of staff, tutors, assistants, students, parents, providers and other school stakeholders.
- To provide clear guidance to all staff and providers on their responsibilities for minimising contact with allergens.
- To ensure that appropriate education/training is available for any staff involved in providing activities to students and staff with allergies.
- To ensure provisions are in place to inform stakeholders of the possible presence of allergens.

Allergy Labelling Legislation

Since December 2014 (updated 2021), legislation has required food businesses to provide allergy information on food sold that is unpackaged. Although The Conservatoire is not a food business, some food materials may occasionally be used in arts activities and foods are often brought onto the site by learners, parents, staff and tutors.

The on-site café *Arts Kitchen* (operated by Cultivating London Ltd), does sell unpackaged pastries, cooked meals and drinks to staff and the public. Arts Kitchen operate their own allergy policy and procedures. Interested parties are advised to request this document from Arts Kitchen directly.

Background Information

What is an allergy?

An allergy is an abnormal reaction of the body's defence system to a normally harmless "trigger" substance (or allergen). An allergy can present itself as a mild itching, swelling, wheezing or digestive condition, or can progress to full-blown anaphylaxis, or anaphylactic shock, which can occur within seconds or minutes of exposure to an offending allergen.

The difference between food allergies and food intolerance

Food intolerances are not the same as food allergies, although some of the symptoms may be similar. Food intolerances aren't life-threatening, although they can be very problematic for those affected.

Common Allergens (non-food)

The following is a list of typical allergens with suggested ways of avoiding risk of exposure.

Pollen

- The allergic reaction is usually known as hay fever.
- People who suffer from hay fever are usually able to manage their symptoms with over-the-counter antihistamines.
- On days of high pollen count, doors and windows may be kept closed to reduce the potential for exposure to pollen.

Dust mites

- Unlike hay fever, the potential to suffer from this allergy is year-round.
- Keeping rooms and workspaces clean and dusted, and removing items that have the potential to gather dust, will help reduce exposure.

Animal dander and saliva

- The risk of exposure to any of these at the Conservatoire is extremely low. However, staff and members of the public who have pets at home should be aware that traces of these may be found on their clothing. The Anaphylaxis Campaign recommends that coats and jackets should be hung away from main working areas.

Insect stings

- Some people may have an extreme reaction to insect stings, such as from bees, hornets and wasps.
- If someone has never been stung before they may not know whether or not they are allergic.
- As a precaution, a first aider should be informed if any student or staff member reports being stung.

- The risk of being stung can be reduced by making yourself less attractive to insects, such as avoiding brightly coloured clothes and scented lotions or cosmetics.

Latex

- Some people may have a mild allergic reaction to products made of latex. In some rare cases, contact with latex can lead to anaphylaxis.
- First Aiders are required to ensure that no latex product in the First Aid kit is used on someone with a known severe allergy to latex.

Medicines

- Some people are allergic to certain medicines such as penicillin or aspirin.
- Students, their parents and agents are requested to let us know if any student has a known allergy to any medicines.

Mould

- Keeping all areas clean will reduce the likelihood of mould. Indoor plants should be watered regularly, and topsoil removed to ensure mould isn't harboured.

Common Food Allergens

Below is a non-exhaustive list of typical food items that may be allergens.

Celery and celeriac

- Often found in salads, soups, celery salt, stock cubes, stew packs, and some meat products.

Cereals

- Found in bread, wheat flour, biscuits, crackers, pasta, breakfast cereals, cakes, pastry, semolina, soya sauce.

Crustaceans, fish and molluscs

- Found in Soy and Worcestershire sauce, fish sauce, relish, some salad dressing, fish extracts, oils and paste.

Eggs

- Found in cakes, sauces, pasta, mayonnaise, some meat products, quiche, mousse, Quorn, any food brushed with egg.

Lupin

- Found in some types of pastries.

Milk

- Found in milk powder, yoghurt, butter, margarine, cheese, cream, ghee, ice cream and custard.

Mustard

- Found in mustard paste, salad dressings, marinades, soups, sauces, curries, some meat products and sometimes in cheese scones.

Tree nuts

- Almonds, brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, hickory nuts, macadamia nuts, pecan nuts, pine nuts, pistachios, walnuts.

Peanuts

- Found in cakes, biscuits, ice cream desserts, breakfast cereal, salad dressing, confectionary, and some vegetarian products.

Sesame seeds

- Often found in hummus, furikake, gomashio and some bread products.

Soya

- People with a soy allergy should avoid foods such as edamame, miso, soymilk and meat alternatives.

Signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis

The following symptoms should help you recognise a potentially life-threatening reaction to an allergen.

- Airway: persistent cough, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing, swollen tongue
- Breathing: difficult or noisy breathing, wheeze or persistent cough
- Consciousness: persistent dizziness / pale or floppy, suddenly sleepy, collapse, unconscious

Steady deterioration is also a warning sign that may mean an injection of adrenaline is vital. Variations in symptoms can occur, in addition to the symptoms above there may also be:

- Widespread flushing of the skin
- Nettle rash (otherwise known as hives or urticaria)
- Swelling of the skin (known as angioedema) anywhere on the body.
- Swelling of the lips
- Abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting

Information Provided to Students and Staff

Signage

- There is prominent signage throughout the Conservatoire site which summarises the symptoms of anaphylaxis and how to deal with a casualty should an emergency arise.

Food products for sale on site

- No food products are sold by the Conservatoire.
- The on-site café is a separate business and operates their own allergy labelling procedures and signage to provide information about allergies and their policy.

Training

- All employed staff are offered specific anaphylaxis training on an annual basis. This is in addition to annual First Aid training.
- We understand that all café staff receive annual anaphylaxis training.

Reducing the Risk of Exposure to Allergens

Where indicated, any or all of the following measures may be implemented to reduce the risk of exposure to allergens. A higher risk level may be assessed where students are staying for full days at the Conservatoire, for example during holiday courses, especially where packed lunches are required.

Activity areas

- Provide additional equipment to reduce sharing between participants
- Provide walkie-talkies to tutors to improve communication
- Arts tables to be cleaned with alcoholic wipes before the session
- Instruments that are used across multiple classes (eg Roundabout flutes and brass) to be cleaned by tutors with alcoholic wipes at the beginning and end of each session

Student Packed Lunches

- Request that packed lunches are not shared between students
- Request that packed lunches avoid nuts
- Request that all students wash hands with soap and water after handling food
- Establish outdoor lunch locations when weather permits

NB: No assurances can be given that packed lunches or other foods brought onto the site by students, staff, parents, providers or other visitors will avoid certain products or ingredients.

Off-Site Activities

- All off-site activities will be risk-assessed for allergy measures as part of the standard Health & Safety risk assessment.
- Where so assessed:
 - The offsite tutor team will receive a specific briefing about any high-risk participants and the other measures that have been implemented to reduce contact with allergens. In particular, guidance on the non-sharing of packed lunches and washing hands before and after handling foodstuffs will be reiterated to all parties.
 - The offsite tutor team will receive a copy of the anaphylaxis emergencies procedures.
 - The offsite tutor team will be given the telephone number for the Conservatoire's direct line. However, in emergencies, off-site staff are reminded to contact 999 in the first instance.

Procedure when a student or parent reports severe allergies

Staff will enquire about allergies at the point of each booking. If the student carries an Adrenaline Auto Injector, they should inform reception staff of this fact at the time of booking and on arrival to each class.

- Responsibility for provision, storage and application of the Adrenaline Auto Injectors will remain with the student and parents
- It is recommended that students bring a second Adrenalin Auto Injector

The parent/guardian has final responsibility for the assessment of appropriateness and safety of activities and premises for their child. While every reasonable attempt will be made to reduce the risk of exposure to allergens, no assurances can be given.

If the parent assesses the risk of allergen exposure to be high, they should remain on-site for the duration of the activity.

Action if someone is suffering a severe allergic reaction

IMMEDIATE ACTION IS REQUIRED. DO NOT DELAY.

- Severe reactions can take place within a few minutes and in extreme cases, where prompt treatment is not sought, can be fatal.
- If a person with an allergy becomes ill, it is likely that person or someone with them will state that they are suffering from an allergic reaction. They may use the word "Anaphylaxis".
- Stay with the casualty and have someone call 999 immediately. Ask someone to fetch a first aider for assistance until the ambulance crew arrives.
- Help the casualty to sit up in the position that best relieves any breathing difficulty. If they become pale with a weak pulse, help them to lie down with legs raised and treat for shock.
- If someone is able to inform Reception of the situation, then they should do so. They should also check with Reception to see if the casualty has brought a second Auto Injector that has been stored at the school.

All staff trained in First Aid will know what to do if someone suffers from anaphylaxis. However, treatment should not be delayed in the immediate absence of a first aider.

If the casualty also has asthma, they should use their inhaler.

If they have an AAI, help them, or their parent, to use it. If they are unable to use it, follow the procedure below:

- Pull off the safety cap.
- Hold the Auto Injector in your fist.
- Push the tip firmly against the casualty's thigh until it clicks (this releases the medication). It can be delivered through clothing, including jeans.
- Hold it for 10 seconds before removing.
- Massage the injection site for 10 seconds.

- If there is no improvement within five minutes and if the ambulance hasn't yet arrived, give the casualty a second dose from their second Auto Injector, if they have one.

Please note: It is lawful for a lay person to administer adrenaline in a life-threatening situation.

Calling an ambulance

The person calling 999 should give the following information:

“This is an emergency. We have someone and believe they are suffering from anaphylaxis”.

(Pronunciation: anna – fill – axis).

Speak clearly and calmly, giving the address.

The Blackheath Conservatoire

19 – 21 Lee Road

London

SE3 9RQ

The operator may ask you to repeat the address to confirm they have it right. Give any other details about the casualty that they ask for and this will help them to confirm that this is an emergency situation.

Further Information

Information on allergies can found online by visiting:

- NHS – Allergies Section: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/allergies/>
- The Anaphylaxis Campaign: <https://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/>