

Thurrock Council

Disabled Children's Short Breaks and Outreach Service Sunshine Centre, Hannah's Place and Befriending

Nut-free Policy

Although we recognise that this cannot be guaranteed, the Disabled Children Short Breaks and Outreach Service (SBOS) aims to be nut and sesame-free across all the service.

This policy serves to set out all measures to reduce the risk to those children and adults who may suffer an anaphylactic reaction if exposed to nuts to which they are sensitive. The SBOS aims to protect children who have allergies to nuts yet also help them, as they grow up, to take responsibility as to what foods they can eat and to be aware of where they may be put at risk. We do not allow nuts or nut products in lunch boxes.

Our "Nut-Free Policy" means that the following items should not be brought into session:

- cakes made with nuts such as Cherry Bakewell, almond slice
- peanut butter sandwiches
- Nutella or chocolate spread with nuts
- fruit and cereal bars that contain nuts
- drinks containing nuts such as almond milk
- pastes or pasta sauces such as pesto – pesto contains pine nuts
- chocolate's that contain nuts, such a Snickers, Kinder Bueno

As a service we are to not use nuts in any of our food or sensory play activities prepared at either site, and we are unable to accept any sweets brought in from home to be given out as birthday treats.

Definition Anaphylaxis (also known as Anaphylactic shock)

This is an allergic condition that can be severe and potentially fatal. Anaphylaxis is your body's immune system reacting badly to a substance (an allergen), such as food, which it wrongly perceives as a threat.

The whole body can be affected, usually within minutes of contact with an allergen, although sometimes the reaction can happen hours later.

Symptoms

The symptoms of anaphylaxis usually start between three and sixty minutes after contact with the allergen. Less commonly they can occur a few hours or even days after contact.

An anaphylactic reaction may lead to feeling unwell or dizzy or may cause fainting due to a sudden drop in blood pressure. Narrowing of the airways can also occur at the same time, with or without the drop in blood pressure. This can cause breathing difficulties and wheezing.

Other symptoms:

- swollen eyes, lips, genitals, hands, feet and other areas (this is called angioedema)

- itching
- sore, red, itchy eyes
- changes in heart rate
- a sudden feeling of extreme anxiety or apprehension
- itchy skin or nettle-rash (hives)
- unconsciousness due to very low blood pressure
- abdominal cramps, vomiting or diarrhoea, or nausea and fever

Anaphylaxis varies in severity. Sometimes it causes only mild itchiness and swelling, but in some people it can cause sudden death. If symptoms start soon after contact with the allergen and rapidly worsens, this indicates that the reaction is more severe.

Staff

Staff and volunteers must ensure they do not bring in or consume nut products into session and ensure they follow good hand washing practice.

Caution must be taken at certain times of year such as Easter and Christmas. If staff distribute confectionary, care must be taken to ensure that no nuts are included in the product. Fruit sweets such as Haribo are a better alternative.

Products that are a particular cause for concern are:

- **Celebrations**
- **Roses, Heroes**
- **Quality Street**

All product packaging must be checked for warnings directed at nut allergy sufferers and if the following or similar are displayed, the product should not be brought into session. Packaging must be checked for:

- "Not suitable for nut allergy sufferers"
- "This product contains nuts"
- "This product may contain traces nuts"

These statements would indicate a product is not suitable to bring to the SBOS.

We do permit packaging that says: "made in a factory that may contain nuts".

As a service that cares for children with many different health care needs, we have a comprehensive healthcare training programme. As part of this staff are signed off as proficient in administering epi-pens. If, as a parent, you wish to have a list of trained staff this can be emailed to you on request.

Parents and carers must notify staff of any known or suspected allergy to nuts and provide all medical and necessary information. This will be added to the child's care plan and, if necessary, a meeting organised with the child or young person's key worker.

We are unable to accept any cakes/snacks either bought or home made for birthday celebrations. We are happy to celebrate birthdays during sessions by way of decorations, games, and so on, but will no longer be able to accept food. If parents would like to send in party bags for their child to give out to friends, again these would need to be made up of non-food items.

SBOS requests that parents and carers observe the nut-free policy and therefore do not include nuts, or any traces of nuts, in packed lunches. If something is included in error, staff will remove it from the lunch box and return to parents at the end of the session.

Children

All children are regularly reminded about the good hygiene practice of washing hands before and after eating which helps to reduce the risk of secondary contamination.

Likewise, children are reminded and carefully supervised to minimise the act of food sharing with their friends.

Document review

It was last reviewed by Lauren Riddick and Laura Hayden – September 2023.