



Wednesday 27 January 2016

Dear Parents/caregivers

As we begin the new school year, it is necessary to remind you that we currently have a significant number of students within our school community who are at risk of anaphylaxis. These students are enrolled across all areas of the school: Holy Angels Early Years Centre (Preps), PJ Doyle Centre (Years 1-4) and Good Samaritan area (Years 5-6). Mater Dei follows a whole school management plan to reduce the risk of these students being exposed to the allergens that have the potential to trigger a severe allergic reaction.

**Anaphylaxis is a severe and sudden allergic reaction that is potentially life threatening and always requires an emergency response.** It occurs when a person is exposed to an allergen to which they are sensitive. The most common allergens or trigger substances that may cause anaphylaxis in school-aged children are: peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, egg, cow's milk, sesame, soy, insect stings, latex and certain medications.

It is therefore critical that our school staff, parents and caregivers are confident about the management and treatment of students who have been diagnosed by a medical practitioner as being anaphylactic or potentially anaphylactic. We need to work together, school staff and parents, to implement daily management strategies to minimise the risk of a reaction whilst the child is at school. ***Education and avoidance of trigger substances or allergens are the keys to good management and treatment of allergies and anaphylaxis.***

Mater Dei has implemented a range of strategies to reduce the students' exposure to potential allergens within the school environment. In keeping with this range of strategies, our first responsibility is to **inform** the school community of the trigger substances and request that these foods are avoided. The main **food allergens** affecting our students enrolled at Mater Dei are **nuts** (specifically peanuts), **tree nuts** (specifically cashews) and **sesame**.

***The Mater Dei Leadership Team, therefore, respectfully requests that parents/caregivers avoid packing foods/food products containing nuts of any kind, but particularly peanuts and cashews and sesame seeds in student lunch boxes. This includes; peanut butter, Nutella, foods containing nuts eg nut muesli bars, chocolate coated nut biscuits/ cakes, foods cooked with peanut oil and any peanut food packaging, foods containing sesame.***

Although it is possible to reduce the risk, Mater Dei Primary School cannot 'blanket ban' certain foods or prohibit the entry of particular food substances. We are not able to guarantee a 'nut free' environment, which could lead to a false sense of

security about exposure to allergens. Rather, we are asking for the cooperation of our parents and staff to avoid bringing/sending in the above listed trigger foods or allergens in order to protect the health, well being and safety of all students within the Mater Dei school community.

We thank parents and staff in anticipation of your cooperation in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

Julie Henderson (on behalf of the Mater Dei Leadership Team)