

Illinois' Statute on Emergency Epinephrine – What does it mean for your child?

Under the Emergency Epinephrine Act - Illinois Public Act 97-0361, physicians who previously would have had to have written a prescription to an individual patient, may now write a prescription to the school. Is this important? Absolutely! A first time anaphylactic reaction to an allergen may occur in school: in a paper referenced in the August 13, 2012 Illinois toolkit issued by the Illinois Attorney General's Office to Physicians, and the Fact Sheet for Schools¹ regarding the Emergency Epinephrine Act, it was indicated that 25% percent of first-time severe allergic reactions occur in school! Without this statutory provision, precious minutes where a child could be treated might be wasted. Now trained nurses are able to administer epinephrine to a student that the nurse believes is having an anaphylactic reaction.

Does this mean your school district has emergency epinephrine pens available? No: the Emergency Epinephrine Act provides that school districts **may** have this life-saving drug available; it does not require that they do so.

Does the Emergency Epinephrine Act go far enough? Here is some information cited in a Recent Pediatrics articles that may help you decide. In a June 2011 article published in Pediatrics², the authors' conclusions include that the prevalence of allergies in children was higher than previously reported, with 8% of the children in the study exhibiting allergic reactions. (The figure of 8% percent of the children in Illinois corresponds to approximately 248,119 children in 2011.³) Based on this study, 3.1% of children (38.7% of those children with food allergies) had a history of severe food-induced reactions, with the risk of having a severe food allergy being double for those children aged 14 to 17 years than in those children aged 2 years and younger. Given these statistics, do you think the statute goes far enough?

The Illinois Attorney General has written to physicians encouraging them to fulfill any requests by a school for a standing order and prescription for emergency undesignated epinephrine auto-injectors⁴. At this time, though, it remains the decision of the independent school districts as to whether or not they will allow their schools to maintain undesignated epinephrine auto-injectors.

Does your school have emergency undesignated epinephrine auto-injectors available?
Check today: your child's safety may depend on it.

For more information on the Illinois PTA's position on children with food allergies, please visit the [Resolutions page](http://illinoispta.org) at illinoispta.org.

Submitted by
Lisa S. Garbaty, Illinois PTA Resolutions Director

¹ http://illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/pressroom/2012_08/20120813.html

² "The Prevalence, Severity, and Distribution of Childhood Food Allergy in the United States," by Ruchi S. Gupta, MD, MPH, Elizabeth E. Springston, BA, Manoj R. Warrier, MD, Bridget Smith, PhD, Rajesh Kumar, MD, Jacqueline Pongracic, MD, and Jane L. Holl, MD, MPH, published in *Pediatrics*, June 2011

³ The estimated number of children was compiled by the author using the statistics from the United States Census for Illinois found at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/17000.html>

⁴ http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/children/Physicians_epinephrineToolkit.pdf