## **Case Study: "The Lunchtime Mishap"**

**Student Profile:**

* **Name:** Alex (gender-neutral)
* **Grade:** 10th Grade
* **Known Medical Condition:** Severe, life-threatening peanut allergy. Alex carries two epinephrine auto-injectors (EpiPens) at all times and has an Anaphylaxis Emergency Action Plan on file with the school nurse. Alex has been educated extensively by parents, doctors, and the school nurse about avoiding peanuts and reading food labels. He does not have a history of asthma.

**The Incident:**

It's a typical Tuesday at Northbridge High School. Alex is in the cafeteria with friends. Today, the school is serving a new "gourmet" cookie as part of the lunch special. Alex, feeling confident and a little distracted by a conversation with friends, grabs a cookie without carefully reading the ingredient label. The cookie looks innocent – like a chocolate chip cookie – and Alex assumes it's safe. Alex eats the entire cookie.

**The Onset of Symptoms:**

Approximately 15 minutes after eating the cookie, while walking to their next class, Alex starts to feel "weird." First, there's an itchy sensation on their skin, particularly around their neck and arms. Within a few more minutes, raised, red, itchy welts (hives) begin to appear on Alex's skin, spreading rapidly. Alex also feels a strange tingling sensation in their mouth.

**Presentation to the Nurse's Office:**

Alex, recognizing some of the early signs of an allergic reaction from previous education, immediately heads to the nurse's office, feeling increasingly anxious.

**In the Nurse's Office:**

The school nurse, Nurse Jacqui, is present. Alex enters the office, visibly distressed.

* **Alex (voice slightly shaky):** “Nurse Jacqui, I think I'm having a reaction. I ate a cookie from the cafeteria and now I'm really itchy and I have hives."
* **Nurse Jacqui:** (Observing Alex's appearance, noting the widespread hives) "Okay, Alex, take a deep breath. Can you tell me exactly what you ate? Did you read the label?"
* **Alex (looking down):** "It was the new chocolate chip cookie. No, I didn't read the label. I just grabbed it. I was talking to Sarah and Mark."
* Alex is now beginning to have lip swelling and difficulty breathing.
* **Nurse Jacqui:** "Alright. We need to act quickly. Do you have your EpiPen with you?"
* **Alex:** "Yes, it's in my backpack."

**Questions for Discussion/Analysis:**

1. **Identify the immediate life threat:** What is the primary concern for Alex given their peanut allergy and the developing symptoms?
2. **What steps should Nurse Jacqui take *immediately*?** (Think about the Anaphylaxis Emergency Action Plan).
3. **Why is it crucial for Alex to carry their EpiPen at all times?**
4. **What specific ingredient was likely in the cookie that caused Alex's reaction, given their known allergy?**
5. **What role did Alex's actions (or inaction) play in this incident?**
6. **Beyond the immediate medical response, what educational points should be reinforced with Alex after this incident?**
7. **How can schools better prevent such incidents from happening, especially regarding cafeteria food and students with severe allergies?**
8. **Why is reading food labels so incredibly important for individuals with food allergies?**
9. **Imagine you are Alex's friend. What could you have done to help Alex in this situation, both before and after they ate the cookie?**