



20 February 2009

Anaphylaxis and Allergic Reactions

Anaphylaxis is the most severe form of allergic reaction and is potentially life threatening. It must be treated as a medical emergency, requiring immediate treatment and urgent medical attention.

Anaphylaxis is a generalised allergic reaction, which often involves more than one body system. A severe allergic reaction usually occurs within 20 minutes of exposure to the trigger and can rapidly become life threatening.

Common causes of severe allergic reactions include medication, insect stings, and particular foods such as nuts /fish/ eggs/ milk.

Other triggers such as latex or exercise are less common.

Signs and Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis may occur almost immediately after exposure or within the first 20 minutes after exposure.

Allergic symptoms may initially appear mild or moderate but can progress rapidly. The most dangerous allergic reactions involve the respiratory system (breathing) and/or cardiovascular system (heart and blood pressure).

Common Symptoms of Mild to Moderate Allergic Reaction Include:

- > Tingling of the mouth
- > Hives, welts or body redness
- > Swelling of the face, lips, eyes
- > Vomiting, abdominal pain

Symptoms of Severe allergic reaction (ANAPHYLAXIS)

- > Difficulty and/or noisy breathing
- > Swelling of the tongue
- > Swelling or tightness in the throat
- > Difficulty talking or hoarse voice
- > Wheeze or persistent cough
- > Loss of consciousness and/or collapse
- > Young Children could even present as pale and floppy.

If you or anyone else is exhibiting any of these symptoms, immediately call triple zero (000) and ask for Ambulance.



People who know that they are at risk need to:

- > Recognise the early signs or symptoms of an allergic reaction
- > Know what to do if anaphylaxis occurs. i.e. give the EpiPen® and call an ambulance.
- > Have the emergency anaphylaxis action plan supplied by your Doctor and your EpiPen® always readily available.

Patients who are at risk should:

- > Wear a Medic Alert bracelet or disc.
This assists in the diagnosis of the emergency by ambulance paramedics or doctors.
- > Carry (and know how to use) self injectable adrenaline (EpiPen®) if you have been prescribed it.
Adrenaline acts as a natural "antidote" to some of the chemicals released during severe allergic reactions.

In the event of any medical emergency, **dial triple zero (000); ask for Ambulance** and remain on the line whilst details of the incident are obtained. Vital first aid information can be given to you whilst Ambulance is dispatched.

Ambulance paramedics in NSW are equipped with the drugs and equipment required to treat allergic reactions and anaphylaxis.

Ambulance recommends that all persons undertake a first aid course with an accredited agency. Those at risk of anaphylaxis and their carers are strongly encouraged to organise training by a credible anaphylaxis educator.

For more information about anaphylaxis, allergic reactions and training, contact Anaphylaxis Australia.

Web: www.allergyfacts.org.au
Phone: 1300 728 000

Thanks to Anaphylaxis Australia for much of the information provided in this media release.