

## Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is the most severe form of an allergic reaction. It is a rare life-threatening event that occurs rapidly and is usually unanticipated and it should always be considered a **MEDICAL EMERGENCY**. Signs and symptoms generally occur within seconds to minutes after exposure to the causative agent, but may be delayed for up to 2 hours or more.

### Common Signs and Symptoms

- Sense of impending doom, loss of consciousness, restlessness, apprehension
- General warmth, swelling or flush feeling of the lips, throat, tongue, hands, feet
- Itchy and tingling skin, hives,
- Complaints of lump in throat, throat tightness, hoarseness, difficulty swallowing
- Wheezing, shortness of breath, cough, chest tightness
- Lightheadedness, clammy, faint, dizziness, palpitations
- Increase nasal congestion or runny nose, sneezing
- Nausea, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, bloating
- Metallic taste, tunnel vision, loss of bladder control

### Treatment

EPINEPHRINE (EpiPen, Adrenalin) is the preferred treatment for anaphylaxis. It rapidly constricts blood vessels and relaxes the lung muscles, reverses swelling, and increases the heart rate.

*THE SOONER IT IS TREATED, THE BETTER THE OUTCOME. THEREFORE, IF YOU ARE AT RISK FOR ANAPHYLAXIS, YOU NEED TO HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN.*

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### Side Effects of Epinephrine

- increased heart rate
- palpitations
- nausea
- difficulty breathing
- sweating
- vomiting
- increase in blood pressure

### Education for the Patients Who Do Not Carry Epinephrine

If you have never had anaphylaxis, but are at risk: example (allergy injection patients) you probably do not carry a form of Epinephrine with you. However, you need to know the symptoms of anaphylaxis, have an emergency plan and seek medical attention immediately whenever Anaphylaxis is suspected. You should ask your doctor about

# Francisco J. Cano, M.D.

Diplomat of the American Board of Allergy, and Immunology  
Pediatric and Adult Asthma, Allergy and Immunology

carrying a liquid antihistamine and/or albuterol.

## Emergency Plan if You Do Not Carry Epinephrine

1. Stay Calm!
2. Remove yourself from the causative agent (if you can)
3. CALL 911 or proceed to go to the ER
4. You can take an antihistamine or any form of albuterol if you have it, but these medications will not stop anaphylaxis!!! If you take these medications you still must seek medical attention IMMEDIATELY!!
5. If you can, lie down and elevate your legs above your heart and stay warm!

## Education for the Patient Who Carries Epinephrine

1. If you have a history of anaphylaxis, you need to know the symptoms of anaphylaxis and should keep an appropriate form of epinephrine on you at all times. You also need to have an emergency plan, and seek medical attention immediately whenever anaphylaxis is suspected.
2. If you have been prescribed an EpiPen or Adrenalin, make sure you and your family have been instructed on how to use it. It is wise to store epinephrine in multiple places (home, school, work, caretakers house, gym, etc).
3. You should educate family, friends, coworkers, and caretakers about anaphylaxis and what to do in an emergency.
4. You need to consistently check the expiration date on your Epinephrine
5. Anaphylaxis can be a very scary and stressful situation. Education, preparedness, and support may help you or your loved one to cope.

## EDUCATE YOURSELF!

## Emergency Plan for the Patient who Has No Epinephrine

1. Stay Calm
2. Remove yourself from the causative agent (if you can)
3. It is important to go to the ER even if you feel better after taking ANY medication because the medication can wear off and there is a chance you could have another reaction. (Take whatever form of epinephrine you used with you to the ER. If you called 911, make sure the paramedics know what you gave yourself).
5. After taking your Epinephrine, try to stay warm and lie down and elevate your legs above your heart.
6. If you live further than 20 minutes from an ER, or travel to remote areas, ask the doctor about carrying more than one dose of Epinephrine.

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## Additional Information

1. Tell us immediately if another doctor has put you on any blood pressure medication, you are trying to/or become pregnant, or if you have heart disease.
2. MYTH Many people (including health care professionals) think that antihistamines and albuterol will stop anaphylaxis. This is NOT TRUE!

These medications help with some of the symptoms of anaphylaxis, but they do not stop the reaction! If you have these medications, you should take them as instructed by your doctor, but then get yourself to the emergency room!