

Anaphylaxis

Emergency Department factsheets

What is Anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is the most severe form of an allergic reaction. It is a generalised reaction, which often involves more than one body system (e.g. skin, respiratory, gastro-intestinal, cardiovascular).

It is a potentially life-threatening illness following exposure to a food, medication, insect (or less commonly – materials, physical activity or a change in temperature) known as an ‘allergen.’

Not all people who are exposed to allergens will develop anaphylaxis.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of anaphylaxis may include:

- difficult / noisy breathing
- swelling of the tongue
- swelling or tightness in the throat
- difficulty talking or hoarse voice
- wheeze or persistent cough
- persistent dizziness or collapse.

Management

Management of anaphylaxis may include:

- removing the person from exposure of the allergen (if known)
- administration of an EpiPen (pre-prepared injection containing adrenaline) or adrenaline by paramedic or medical staff
- administration of asthma or anti-histamine medications to help relieve symptoms
- observation in hospital.

Next steps

It is important that you follow-up with your general practitioner, local doctor or an allergy clinic within one week to find out the cause of your anaphylaxis and how it may be prevented in the future.

Return immediately

Return to the emergency department immediately if you develop any of the following:

- difficult or noisy breathing
- hives or welts
- swelling of the face, eyes, lips, or tongue
- abdominal pain or persistent vomiting.

Seeking help

In a medical emergency, go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call an ambulance (dial 000). For other medical problems see your local doctor or health-care professional.

13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) provides health information, referral and teletriage services to the public in all parts of Queensland and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for the cost of a local call*.

*Calls from mobile phones may be charged at a higher rate. Please check with your telephone service provider

Disclaimer: This health information is for general education purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

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