



First aid fact sheet

Severe allergic reaction



A severe allergic reaction is called anaphylaxis. It is potentially life-threatening.

- People diagnosed with severe allergies should have an anaphylaxis action plan and an adrenaline auto-injector. They can also wear a medical alert device.
- Use any available adrenaline auto-injector in an emergency.
- ALWAYS GIVE ADRENALINE AUTOINJECTOR FIRST, and then asthma reliever puffer if someone with known asthma and allergy to food, insects or medication has SUDDEN BREATHING DIFFICULTY (including wheeze, persistent cough or hoarse voice) even if there are no skin symptoms.

Signs & symptoms

The following signs and symptoms of a **mild to moderate allergic reaction** can precede anaphylaxis:

- swelling of lips, face, eyes
- hives, welts or body redness
- tingling mouth.
- Abdominal pain, vomiting, are signs of anaphylaxis for insect allergy.

The main symptoms of a **severe allergic reaction** are rapidly developing breathing and circulation problems.

Other signs and symptoms can include:

- difficult or noisy breathing
- swelling of tongue
- Swelling or tightness in throat
- wheeze or persistent cough
- difficulty talking or a hoarse voice
- dizziness or collapse
- pallor and floppiness (in young children)

What to do

- 1 Follow DRSABCD.
- 2 Do not allow the patient to stand or walk. Help the patient to lie down flat, or if breathing is difficult, allow the patient to sit. Hold young children flat, not upright.
- 3 Ask the patient if they need help with their action plan if they have one. Only help the patient if they request it. If the patient is unable to give verbal consent, administer an adrenaline auto-injector immediately.

How to give an EpiPen®

- 4 Form a fist around the EpiPen® and PULL OFF THE BLUE SAFETY RELEASE.
- 5 Hold the patient's leg still and PLACE THE ORANGE END against the patient's outer mid-thigh (with or without clothing).
- 6 PUSH DOWN HARD until a click is heard or felt, and hold in place for 3 seconds. REMOVE the EpiPen®.
- 7 Call **Triple Zero (000)** for an ambulance.
- 8 Monitor the patient. If there is no improvement after 5 minutes, use another adrenaline auto-injector, if available.
- 9 If breathing stops, follow DRSABCD.

Action plans at ASCIA – www.allergy.org.au/hp/anaphylaxis/ascia-action-plan-for-anaphylaxis

In a medical emergency call Triple Zero (000)

DRSABCD Danger ▶ Response ▶ Send for help ▶ Airway ▶ Breathing ▶ CPR ▶ Defibrillation

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