

Child and Adolescent Health Specialists, PC

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Anaphylaxis

Information from healthychildren.org

What is anaphylaxis? What should I do if my child has an anaphylactic reaction?

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction. It comes on quickly and can be fatal. This type of reaction is a medical emergency and immediate medical attention is important. For anyone experiencing anaphylaxis, epinephrine should be given right away followed by a call to 911 for further treatment and transfer to a hospital.

Symptoms of Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis includes a wide range of symptoms that often happen quickly. The most severe symptoms restrict breathing and blood circulation. Combinations of symptoms may occur. The most common symptoms may affect the following:

- **Skin:** itching, hives, redness, swelling
- **Nose:** sneezing, stuffy nose, runny nose
- **Mouth:** itching, swelling of lips or tongue
- **Throat:** itching, tightness, difficulty swallowing, hoarseness
- **Chest:** shortness of breath, cough, wheeze, chest pain, tightness
- **Heart:** weak pulse, passing out, shock
- **Gut:** vomiting, diarrhea, cramps
- **Neruologic:** dizziness, fainting, feeling that you are about to die

Causes of Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis occurs when the immune system overreacts to normally harmless substances called allergens. The following are the most common allergens that can trigger anaphylaxis:

- Food such as
 - Peanuts
 - Nuts from trees (such as walnuts, pistachios, pecans, cashews)
 - Shellfish (such as shrimp, lobster)
 - Fish (such as tuna, salmon, cod)
 - Milk
 - Eggs
- In rare cases, anaphylaxis may be related to a certain food followed by exercise.

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- Insect stings such as from
 - Bees
 - Wasps
 - Hornets
 - Yellow jackets
 - Fire ants
- Medicines. Antibiotics and antiseizure medicines are some of the more common medicines that cause anaphylaxis. However, any medicine, even aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, have the potential to cause severe reactions.

Epinephrine

The main medicine to treat anaphylaxis is epinephrine. This is a medicine given by an injection. The best place to inject it is in the muscles of the outer part of the thigh. If the symptoms do not improve very quickly, the injection should be given again in 5 to 30 minutes.

Children who are old enough can be taught how to give themselves epinephrine if needed. The medicine comes in auto-injector syringes (EpiPen or Twinject) to make this easier. Epinephrine should be prescribed for anyone who has ever had an anaphylactic attack and for children at high risk for anaphylaxis. They are available in 2 different doses based on the weight of the child. You should always have at least 2 doses with you at all times. School-aged children also need one at school with instructions from their doctor about how and when to use it.

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