

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is the most severe form of an allergic reaction. It is a rare life-threatening event that occurs rapidly and should be considered a MEDICAL EMERGENCY. Signs and symptoms can 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 flushing of the lips, throat, tongue, hands or feet

Itchy and tingling skin, hives

Throat tightness, hoarseness, difficulty swallowing, feels like lump in throat

Wheezing, shortness of breath, cough, chest tightness

Lightheadedness, clammy feeling, faint, dizziness, palpitations

Increased 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.

Side effects of epinephrine include: increased heart rate, palpitations, nausea, difficulty breathing, and sweating, vomiting, increased blood pressure.

The sooner Anaphylaxis is treated, the better the outcome. THEREFORE, IF YOU ARE AT RISK FOR ANAPHYLAXIS YOU NEED TO HAVE AN EMERGENCY PLAN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Emergency Plan for Patients Who DO NOT CARRY EPINEPHRINE

Stay Calm!

Remove yourself from the causative agent (if you can)

CALL 911 or go to ER

Take an antihistamine or any form of albuterol if you are having symptoms and you have those meds, but understand that these medications will not stop anaphylaxis!! If you take these medications you must still seek medical attention immediately!!

If you can, lie down and elevate your legs above your heart and keep yourself warm.

*Further education for patients who do not carry epinephrine: If you have never had anaphylaxis, but are at risk (ex. Allergy injection patients), you need to know the symptoms of anaphylaxis, have an emergency plan, and seek medical attention immediately whenever anaphylaxis is suspected. You should also consider carrying a liquid antihistamine and **Asthma patients should always carry their albuterol with them at all times!!***

Emergency Plan for Patients Who Carry Epinephrine

1st Take **your Epinephrine!!!!!!** Also You may take an antihistamine or any form of albuterol if you have it, but understand that antihistamines and albuterol will not stop anaphylaxis!!

Stay Calm!

Remove yourself from the causative agent (if you can)

CALL 911 or go to ER

If you can, lie down and elevate your legs above your heart and keep yourself warm.

Be sure to let medical personnel know what medications you took

Further education for patients who carry epinephrine: *If you have a history of anaphylaxis, you need to know the symptoms of anaphylaxis and carry a form of epinephrine with you at all times. You also need to have an emergency plan and seek medical attention immediately whenever you suspect anaphylaxis. You should also carry a liquid antihistamine and **Asthma patients should always carry their albuterol with them at all times!!***

Make sure you educate your family, friends and coworkers and caretakers about anaphylaxis and what to do in an emergency. Be sure to educate them on how to use epinephrine.

Carry your epinephrine with you at all times and consistently check the expiration date.

Anaphylaxis can be very scary and stressful. EDUCATE YOURSELF!!! Education, preparedness and support may help you or your loved one in an emergency situation.

Special Considerations

If you live, work or vacation farther than 20 minutes from an emergency room, you should talk with your Dr. about carrying and using more than one dose of epinephrine.

Tell us immediately if you become pregnant.

Tell us immediately if you are diagnosed with heart disease.

Tell us immediately if another Dr. changes or puts you on any blood pressure medications (especially beta blockers).

****Many people (including health care professionals) think antihistamines and albuterol will stop anaphylaxis...THIS IS NOT TRUE! These medications help with some of the symptoms so take them if you have them but then get to the emergency room immediately!!!**

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