

Advice sheet for patients discharged after a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis

You have been given this advice sheet as you are at risk of severe allergic reactions or anaphylaxis.

What is anaphylaxis?

An anaphylactic reaction is a life-threatening allergic reaction which can happen very quickly. It can be set off by various triggers. The most common triggers are certain foods, medicines, and wasp and bee stings.

What are the symptoms of anaphylaxis?

- Swelling in the throat
- Change in voice
- Difficulty swallowing or breathing
- Wheezing
- Dizziness
- Feeling faint
- Sudden tiredness

What should I do if I start with symptoms of allergic reaction?

Mild to moderate symptoms

If you develop itching of skin, swelling, hives or raised rash on your face or body without any symptoms mentioned above, use an antihistamine (chlorphenamine (Piriton® is one brand of chlorphenamine), loratadine, cetirizine, etc.). This will help in mild to moderate symptoms of allergy.

If you are asthmatic and already struggling with your asthma control, use of your blue inhalers will help to improve breathing. See your GP if necessary.

Severe symptoms

- Rapid onset of throat swelling, breathing difficulty and faint feeling can be symptoms of anaphylaxis
- You are recommended to carry two adrenaline auto-injectors with you at all times
- Check the expiry date on your adrenaline auto-injectors and ask your doctor or nurse to prescribe you new ones before they expire. Out-of-date injectors may not work.
- Inject yourself in the outer thigh at the first signs of a severe allergic reaction.
- Every time you use an adrenaline auto-injector:
 - Call 999, ask for an ambulance and state 'anaphylaxis', even if you start to feel better

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- Lie flat with your legs up to keep your blood flowing. However, if you are having difficulty breathing, you may need to sit up to make breathing easier
- If you are able to, seek help immediately after using your auto-injector. If possible, avoid being on your own while waiting for the ambulance
- If you still feel unwell after the first injection, use your second injector 5 to 15 minutes after the first.
- An adrenaline autoinjector is for emergency, on-the-spot treatment of an anaphylactic reaction. Always go to hospital after using an adrenaline auto-injector.
- If you are in doubt about whether your reaction is severe or not, use your adrenaline auto-injector.

What is a biphasic response?

Once symptoms of allergic reaction are completely resolved, you are still at risk of developing second phase of reaction. This commonly happens within **6-12 hours** but can extend up to **72 hours**. Symptoms in second phase are usually mild and unlikely to be life-threatening but you are advised to follow the guidance explained above.

Adrenaline auto-injector

An adrenaline auto-injector is an injection device filled with adrenaline. You should use it to inject yourself if you have an anaphylactic reaction.

There is a separate guide with the auto-injector you are given, explaining how to use it. Read your advice sheet and guide thoroughly and ask your doctor or nurse if you have any question before leaving the emergency department.

Avoid the suspected trigger

The best management is to avoid the trigger if it is known

Most allergic reactions in the community are to foods and stings.

Until you are seen by specialist and tested further for specific allergens, you **must** avoid any food suspected to be the trigger for your reaction.

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Are you a victim of Domestic Violence? For confidential advice, contact:

Bradford	0808 2800 999	https://www.stayingput.uk.net/contact
North Yorkshire	03000 110 110	https://www.idas.org.uk/
Lancashire	0300 323 0085	https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/your-health-and-wellbeing/domestic-abuse/

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01535 294019

Author: Emergency Department
Date of publication: July 2019
Date revised: January 2022
Date of review: January 2024

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