

ALL about ANAPHYLAXIS

WHAT IS ANAPHYLAXIS?

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction. It has the potential to be life threatening.

SYMPTOMS AND HOW TO IDENTIFY AN ANAPHYLACTIC REACTION

There are several different criteria that medical providers use to diagnose anaphylaxis. However, from a parent's perspective, it may be difficult to tell whether your child is having an anaphylactic reaction. In order to make that determination easier, first assess what symptoms your child has:

Category	Symptoms(s)	
Mouth	Itching, tingling, or swelling of mouth, lips, or tongue	LOCALIZED REACTION: If your child has symptoms from ONLY 1 of the yellow categories, then he or she is most likely having a localized reaction, and not anaphylaxis.
Nose/ Eyes	Hayfever-like symptoms: runny, itchy nose; red, itchy eyes	
Skin	Hives, itchy rash, flushing (redness and warmth), swelling of face or extremities	
GI	Nausea, abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea	
Throat	Hacking cough, tightening of throat, hoarseness, difficulty swallowing	ANAPHYLAXIS: If your child has symptoms from ANY 1 of the red categories -OR- 2 OR MORE of any category (yellow or red), then he or she is most likely having anaphylaxis.
Lungs	Shortness of breath; wheezing; repeated coughing	
Heart	Weak pulse, low blood pressure, fainting, dizzy, pale, cyanosis (blueness)	

WHAT CAUSES AN ANAPHYLACTIC REACTION?

Anaphylaxis results from exposure to a specific allergen. The reaction usually occurs immediately or shortly after ingestion of the problematic food.

HOW TO PREVENT ANAPHYLAXIS?

The only way to prevent an anaphylactic reaction is to avoid the foods that trigger an allergic reaction.

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN ANAPHYLACTIC REACTION?

- 1) Administer epinephrine via an epinephrine autoinjector (EpiPen® or Adrenaclick® or Twinject®)
- 2) Go to the nearest hospital or emergency room

IS IT NECESSARY TO GO TO THE HOSPITAL FOR AN ANAPHYLACTIC REACTION?

Yes. Even if it seems like all symptoms have disappeared, it is still necessary to go to the hospital. Patients need to be observed for four to six hours after an anaphylactic reaction. Sometimes a second set of symptoms will occur, known as a biphasic reaction.

WHAT IS EPINEPHRINE?

Epinephrine is adrenaline and is used to reverse the symptoms of anaphylaxis. It is rapidly acting and can treat even the most serious symptoms of anaphylaxis. Epinephrine can reduce swelling, open the airways, and reverse the fall in blood pressure. Usually the doctor prescribes epinephrine in an autoinjector known as the EpiPen® or Adrenaclick® or Twinject®.

HOW SAFE IS EPINEPHRINE?

Epinephrine is very safe and only minor side effects result from administering it. Side effects might include rapid heartbeat, headache, restlessness, and shakiness. If your child has symptoms of anaphylaxis (see above), it is essential to administer epinephrine without delay.

Common Anaphylaxis Myths

MYTH #1: Anaphylaxis always presents with skin symptoms
 Actually:
 • About 20% of anaphylactic reactions do not present with hives or other skin symptoms.
 • 80% of fatal anaphylactic reactions caused by food allergies were not associated with skin symptoms.

MYTH #2: Previous reactions predict future episodes
 Actually:
 • There is no predictable pattern
 • Severity of a reaction depends on:
 - Sensitivity of the individual
 - Amount of the allergen
 - Other conditions, including asthma
 - Route of exposure

MYTH #3: Epinephrine is dangerous
 Actually:
 • The risks of anaphylaxis are much greater than the risks associated with epinephrine administration
 • There are minimal risks in children; side effects can include shakiness, rapid heart beat, and headache.

Reference/Additional Resources

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (foodallergy.org)
 Food Allergy Initiative (faiusa.org)

Contact:

Food Allergy Program
 Children's National Medical Center

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