

Allergic Reaction / Anaphylaxis

Your health and safety are very important to us. Because of the large number of people with the flu, hospitals and emergency rooms are very busy. As a result, we are closely evaluating who we can take in the ambulance to the hospital.

We have evaluated that you do not need to go in the ambulance to the hospital at this time. Paramedics are giving you this sheet to help you care for yourself at home.

You can get medical care at a clinic, urgent care center or an emergency room. If you decide to do so, you will need to get to these places on your own. Remember hospitals are seeing a lot of patients with the flu. If you go to a hospital you risk getting infected with the flu.

What Causes an Allergic Reaction?

An allergic reaction is the body's way of responding to a foreign substance. When the body senses a foreign substance has entered the body, called an antigen, the immune system is triggered to protect the body. The immune system normally protects the body from harmful agents such as bacteria and toxins. When the immune system overreacts to an antigen, this is when an allergic reaction happens.

- Allergens can be essentially anything, including food, dust, pollen, medications, animal dander, or stings.
- Reactions can be in just one spot, such as a small skin rash, itchy eyes. This would be a localized reaction.
- Reactions can also include many different symptoms affecting different parts or systems of the body. These would be a systemic reaction.

In rare cases, allergic reactions can be life threatening. These reactions are known as Anaphylaxis. This is where symptoms develop rapidly, often over seconds or minutes. Anaphylactic reactions are usually a result of a previous exposure you had to an antigen which caused the immune system to become over sensitive to that antigen. When another exposure happens with that antigen, the immune system overreacts in a sudden and severe way affecting the whole body.

Symptoms of Anaphylaxis

- Shortness of breath.
- Wheezing or cough.
- Swelling in your airway.
- Anxiety.
- Rapid heart beat.
- Low blood pressure.
- Fainting, dizziness or light-headedness.
- Nausea and/or vomiting.
- Hives or rash.
- Abdominal pain or cramping.
- Overall skin redness.

Anaphylaxis is a life threatening condition and requires immediate treatment.

Treatment for the milder allergic reaction:

Medications called Antihistamines are used to treat allergic reactions. Benadryl or Diphenhydramine is the most common medication used. Occasionally corticosteroids are also needed to suppress the immune system and decrease swelling. Treatment for Anaphylaxis will include many different treatments, including epinephrine.

This information is to help you care for a person who has an allergic reaction.

The evaluation and/or treatment by the paramedics today are not to replace the recommendation of a doctor.

You can get medical care by a doctor on your own.

You should call 911 for any medical symptom, concerns that happen after we leave today.



These Home Care Instructions are for use during specified times of severe pandemic influenza, courtesy of the Metro Region EMS System, Metro Emergency Services Board, 2099 W. University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55014-3431