

EPIPEN Injection for Severe Allergic Reactions

What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a sudden, severe, and potentially fatal allergic reaction that can cause breathing problems, fainting, a drop in blood pressure, rash, and nausea. For example, a student may have a peanut allergy, but mistakenly eats a product with peanuts in it. The body's immune system may respond with an allergic reaction.

What can trigger a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is triggered when a person comes in contact with an allergen through skin contact, stings, swallowing, or breathing in fine particles. Even eating a very small amount of a problem food may cause a reaction in some people. In rare cases, exercising within a few hours after eating a specific food may cause an anaphylactic reaction.

What are the most common things people are allergic to?

The most common items are peanuts, tree nuts, fish, shellfish, milk, and eggs, insect stings, latex, medications like penicillin or aspirin, unknown.

What are the signs that a person may be having an allergic reaction?

Signs are tingling or warm sensation of skin, itching, hives, metallic taste in mouth, difficulty breathing or swallowing, vomiting, diarrhea, cramping, loss of consciousness due to a drop in blood pressure.

What is the best way to combat an anaphylactic reaction?

Epinephrine, the active ingredient in the EPIPEN or TWINJECT, is the recommended treatment. It is administered by injection through the skin into the thigh. It begins working immediately. Epinephrine helps a person breathe by relaxing the airway in the lungs. It also reversed dropping blood pressure by constricting small blood vessels.

What to do if you were called on to help in this situation?

Help a person administer EPIPEN or administer it yourself, stay with the person while someone else calls 911 (dial from school 9-911) and gets the school nurse. Stay with the person and offer reassurance. Nurses can be reached by radio or by emergency Health Services phone lines: Northfield, x3000, Winnetka, x2900.

How does NT Health Services manage students with the potential for an allergic/anaphylactic reaction?

Health Services works with student, family, and physician to develop an emergency action plan. Some students are allowed to carry an EPIPEN with them at all times. Others store them in Health Services. Ideally, a student with the potential for an anaphylactic allergic reaction will carry an EPIPEN and keep one in Health Services. The emergency action plan is shared with teachers and other staff that are involved in the student's school activities with parent permission.