



Anaphylaxis (severe allergic reaction)

You came to the emergency department with anaphylaxis, a severe allergic reaction. You have been treated and watched until it was safe for you to go home. This sheet explains what happened, how to stay safe, and when to get help fast.

What is it?

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction that affects the whole body. It can cause swelling of the lips, tongue or throat, trouble breathing, wheeze, a rash, belly pain, vomiting or fainting. Common triggers are foods, insect stings and some medicines. Sometimes the cause is not found. Symptoms can come back hours later, even after treatment.

Looking after yourself at home

- Have an adult stay with you for the first 24 hours, as the reaction can come back.
- Avoid the thing that caused the reaction, if it is known. Read food labels carefully.
- If you were given an adrenaline auto-injector, carry it with you at all times and learn how to use it.
- Tell your family, friends and workplace about your allergy and what to do in an emergency.
- Rest today. Avoid alcohol and hard exercise until you feel fully well.

Medicines

- If you were given an adrenaline auto-injector, use it straight away at the first sign of a severe reaction, then call an ambulance.
- Take any antihistamine or steroid tablets exactly as your doctor told you or as the packet says.
- Tell every doctor, dentist and pharmacist about your allergy before you take any new medicine.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre within 1 week to review what happened.
- Ask to be referred to an allergy specialist to find the cause and plan for the future.
- Ask about wearing a medical alert bracelet or card.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Swelling of the lips, tongue or throat, or trouble swallowing
- Difficulty breathing, wheezing, noisy breathing or a hoarse voice
- Feeling faint, dizzy or very weak, or collapsing
- Feeling very drowsy or confused, or being hard to wake
- A widespread rash with vomiting or severe belly pain
- Any sign of a severe reaction — use your adrenaline auto-injector if you have one, then call an ambulance



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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