

## Patient information

### Suspected Anaphylaxis Information for Patients and Carers

#### Emergency Medicine

You have been treated for a suspected anaphylactic reaction. Anaphylaxis is a severe and potentially life threatening allergic reaction. It occurs when the body's immune system mistakes a harmless substance (an allergen) as a threat. The body responds by releasing chemicals in an attempt to combat the threat which can cause a drop in blood pressure, swelling of the throat, lips and eyes along with difficulty in breathing.

It can sometimes be difficult to identify the allergen or trigger responsible for the reaction you will therefore be offered a referral to an allergy specialist who can help with this.

#### The most common triggers are:

- **Food** such as nuts, milk and shellfish.
- **Insect venom** such as wasp or bee stings.
- **Medication.**
- **Latex.**

However, not all patients who experience anaphylaxis have an identifiable trigger this is called idiopathic anaphylaxis.

The best way to avoid further anaphylactic reactions is to avoid the trigger allergen. If the trigger is food or unknown this can be difficult. Vigilance is important to avoid triggers.

If food is your trigger you must look carefully at ingredient lists and remember that recipes can change. You should be particularly careful eating food prepared outside the home by others such as in restaurants. Ask questions about the ingredients used in each dish you are considering to ensure it does not contain your trigger food.

**Despite your best efforts however you may have an accidental exposure to your trigger. It is therefore important that you can recognise the signs and symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction and what to do should one occur.**

The treatment for anaphylaxis is adrenaline injected into the outer aspect of the thigh. It is important that this is given quickly and as soon as possible after a reaction is recognised.

On discharge from hospital you will have been given an auto injector of adrenaline to take home to use should you have another reaction. An explanation and practical demonstration of how and when to use the adrenaline device, should be given to you before you leave the hospital.

## Signs and Symptoms

Different people can suffer different symptoms during an anaphylactic reaction.

### The most common are:

- **Swelling** to the lips, tongue, throat, eyes and skin.
- **Tingling** in the mouth or a strange taste.
- **Breathing**, speaking or swallowing difficulties.
- **Itchy** red bumpy rash (hives).
- **Tightness** in the chest with wheezing or coughing.
- **Passing** out or feeling like you are about to.
- **Suddenly** feeling weak or having no energy.
- **A feeling** of impending doom.
- **Abdominal** pain, nausea or vomiting.
- **Diarrhoea**.

### What to do if symptoms occur

- Inform those around you, you think you are having an anaphylactic reaction.
- Locate your adrenaline device (with the help of others if necessary).
- Sit or lie down and administer the adrenaline as demonstrated to you (a separate advice sheet on adrenaline administration is available).
- Call 999 and state you are having an anaphylactic reaction. This is important even if you feel better as in some patients symptoms will return, this is called a biphasic reaction.
- If you are an asthmatic and use a reliever inhaler take your usual dose.
- If you have been stung try and remove any visible sting.

### You should use your adrenaline auto-injector as soon as you are aware of any severe symptoms of a reaction:

- Difficulty breathing.
- Tightness in throat.
- Dizziness/faintness.

**Always lie down if the symptoms include weakness or faintness.**

## **What happens next?**

Following this visit to the Emergency Department you will have been referred to an Allergy Clinic. This is so your problem and its possible causes can be reviewed by an appropriate specialist. You should receive an appointment in the next couple of months.

## **Discharge Check List**

### **Information you need before your discharge from hospital**

- The signs and symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction.
- Information about the risk of biphasic reactions.
- What to do should an anaphylactic reaction occur (call 999 and administer adrenaline).
- Demonstration of adrenaline injector and when to use it.
- Advice about avoiding triggers if they are known.
- The offer of an allergy specialist referral and an explanation of the referral process.
- Information about anaphylaxis support groups.

## **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future. Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## **Further Information**

### **Royal Liverpool Hospital Emergency Department**

**Tel: 0151 706 2124**

**Text phone Number: 18001 0151 706 2124**

**[www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)**

**Telephone number: 01322 619898.**

**NICE guidance is available by following link below:**

**[www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/13626/57616/57616.doc](http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/13626/57616/57616.doc)**

**The Anaphylaxis Campaign**

**PO Box 275**

**Farnborough**

**Hampshire**

**GU14 6SX**

**Helpline 01252 542029**

**[www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)**

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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