



16538 59A Street Edmonton, AB T5Y0B2

## **ALLERGIC REACTION OVERVIEW**

An allergic reaction is the body's way of responding to an "invader". When the body senses a foreign substance, called an antigen, the immune system normally protects the body from harmful agents such as bacteria and toxins. Its overreaction to a harmful substance (an allergen) is called a hypersensitivity, or allergic, reaction.

Anything can be an allergen. Common dust, pollen, plants, medication certain foods, insect venoms, viruses, or bacteria are examples of allergens.

Reactions may be in one spot, such as a small skin rash or itchy eyes, or all over, as in a whole-body rash.

A reaction may include one or several symptoms.

### **ALLERGIC REACTION SYMPTOMS**

The look and feel of an allergic reaction depend on the body part involved and the severity of the reaction. Some reactions affect many areas, others affect just one area. Reactions to the same allergen vary by individual.

Term for any combination of allergic symptoms that is rapid, or sudden, and potentially Anaphylaxis is the life threatening. Call an ambulance immediately if you suspect anaphylaxis.

One sign of anaphylaxis is shock. Shock has a very specific meaning in medicine: the organs of the body are not getting enough blood because of dangerously low blood pressure. Shock may lead rapidly to death. The person in shock may be pale or red, sweaty or dry, confused, anxious, or conscious.



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Breathing may be difficult or noisy, or the person may be unable to breathe.

Shock is caused by sudden dilation of many or large blood vessels. This is brought on by the actions of the mediators. If the drop in blood pressure is sudden and drastic, it can lead to unconsciousness, even cardiac arrest and death.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction include any, some, or many of these:

Skin – Redness, itching, swelling, blistering, weeping, crusting rash, eruptions, or hives (itchy bumps or welts)

Lungs – Wheezing, tightness, cough, or shortness of breath

Head – Swelling of the face, eyelids, lips, tongue, or throat; headache.

Nose – Stuffy nose, runny nose (clear, thin discharge), sneezing

Eyes – Red (bloodshot) itchy, swollen, or watery

Stomach – Pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or bloody diarrhea.

## **SELF – CARE AT THE CENTRE**

Avoid triggers! If you know you have an allergic reaction to peanuts, for example, do not eat them. Go out of your way to avoid foods prepared with or around peanuts. Self –care at home is not enough in severe reactions. A severe reaction a medical emergency.

- Do not attempt to treat or “wait out” severe reactions at home. Go immediately to a hospital emergency department.
- If no one available to drive you right away, call 911 for emergency medical transport.
- For more information on what to do in a severe reaction, see Anaphylaxis.

Small reactions with mild symptoms usually respond to nonprescription allergy medications. An oral antihistamine such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl). Caution – These may make you too drowsy to drive or operate



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machinery safely. They can affect concentration and interfere with children's learning in school. These medications should be taken for only a few days. For rashes, an anti – inflammatory steroid cream such as hydrocortisone For small, Localized skin reactions, try cold, wet clothes or ice. Try applying a bag of frozen vegetables wrapped in a towel.

## **ALLERGY KITS**

Children may be allergic to a variety of substance, including bee stings, yellow jacket stings, nuts and seafood. Allergy kits are available and can be useful in emergency situations. Two kits are available on the market, both contain adrenalin and antihistamine.

### **1. EPI Pen:**

The kit contains the pre-measured medication in a “pen”. To administer the medication, place the pen against the skin and press a button.

### **2. ANA Kit:**

A needle with pre-measured medication is used. The administration would require skill in the use of needles. It is recommended that parents of children with severe allergies supply a kit to the daycare as a precaution. Parents should ensure staff know how and when to administer. The kit must be identified and stored in a safe place. Consent from the parents is needed for the administration of medication.