

USE OF "EPI PEN" FOR ALLERGIC EMERGENCIES

What is the Epi Pen?

The Epi Pen ingredient is epinephrine. This is the treatment of choice for allergic emergencies (anaphylactic reactions). Epinephrine quickly constricts blood vessels, relaxes smooth muscles in the lungs to improve breathing, stimulates the heartbeat, and works to reverse hives and swelling around the face and lips.

The Epi Pen is commonly prescribed for people who have had severe allergic reactions to certain foods such as nuts, eggs, or food additives; to drugs such as penicillin; to stings by bees, wasps, hornets, or to exercise.

When do I give it?

Allergic reactions can occur in seconds or minutes after exposure to the substance. The person with an allergic reaction may complain of dizziness, faintness, hives, flushing of the face, itching, swelling of the face, tongue and/or lips. Use the Epi Pen when the person complains of tightness or pain in the chest, difficulty swallowing and/or breathing.

If you're not sure, but individual does seem uncomfortable or in distress - - give it. It is safer to do this than to wait.

How do I give it?

Remove the gray safety cap. Hold the Epi Pen with the black tip against the thigh, and apply moderate pressure for ten (10) seconds. Pushing the Epi Pen against the thigh releases a spring activated plunger, pushing the concealed needle into the thigh muscle and delivering a dose of epinephrine. Do not give into a vein nor into the buttocks. If accidental injection into hands or feet occurs, go immediately to nearest emergency department. Epi Pen should only be given into the front side area of the thigh. Massage the site after injection to prevent tissue damage. If necessary Epi Pen can be used directly through clothing.

Then what?

Get medical help immediately - 911. Stay with the person, keep them warm and resting. The effects of the injection wear off after 10 - 20 minutes. Symptoms can recur. Notify parents of the reaction and the student's condition. After the injection, person may feel a more rapid heart beat, nervousness, and headache. Stay with him until emergency medical help arrives. Send Epi Pen with them so the physician will know the dosage given.

What else should I know?

Epi Pen cannot be reused.

Epi Pen comes in two strengths:

0.3 mgm for adults

0.15 mgm for young children

Check expiration date on package.

Store at room temperature - do not refrigerate.

If solution appears brown, replace the unit.

Dede Meidinger, BSN, RN, CSN

08/08/96

Reviewed 07/29/09