



Recognizing Allergic Reactions

Allergy symptoms range from very mild to fatal. They can happen alone or together with other symptoms. Some allergic reactions happen within minutes of eating the food while others take hours to appear.

Common Symptoms of Food Allergies

- Itching, rashes, hives and eczema
- Nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhea, constipation
- Sneezing, coughing, wheezing, congestion, runny nose, asthma

Anaphylactic Reactions

These are the **most severe reactions**. They involve the whole body, including the cardiovascular system (heart and blood circulation).

- Skin: hives, swelling, itching, warmth, redness, rash
- Breathing (respiratory): coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain/tightness, throat tightness/swelling, hoarse voice, nasal congestion or hay-fever symptoms (runny nose and watery eyes), trouble swallowing
- Stomach: nausea, pain/cramps, vomiting, diarrhea
- Heart: pale or blue colour skin, weak pulse, passing out, dizzy/lightheaded, shock
- Other: anxiety, feeling of "impending doom," headache, metallic taste in mouth

WHEN IN DOUBT, INJECT!

Epinephrine (adrenaline) is the first line of defense during a reaction. **It is not safe to wait for emergency medical personnel to give the injection**, or to use other drugs (like antihistamines or asthma medication) instead of epinephrine. There is only one epinephrine auto-injector in Canada: **EpiPen**.

ACTION:

1. Give EpiPen at the first signs of an allergic reaction.
2. Call 9-1-1 and tell them that someone is having an anaphylactic reaction.
3. You can give a second dose of EpiPen as early as 5 minutes after the first dose if there are no improvements in symptoms.
4. Go to the nearest hospital right away (ideally by ambulance) even if symptoms are mild or have stopped. The reaction could get worse or come back after using EpiPen.
5. Call the emergency contact person (eg. parent or guardian)