

# Anaphylactic Shock

## How Do You Treat Serious Reactions

If you know you're allergic to bee stings or have allergies that can cause anaphylactic shock, it's wise to carry the self-injectable antidote epinephrine (syringe), better known as adrenalin. These prescription kits are sold under the names Ana-Kit, EpiPen, and EpiPen Jr. (for children), among others. These syringes are injected into the front of the thigh or a muscle and work to constrict the blood vessels before more damage can be done. Most of the kits come with only one syringe and, on occasion, more than one dose is needed. Because bee stings or allergies can happen at almost any time it is important to keep several kits on hand, especially if medical help is out of reach (for example, during camping trips, hikes, and on vacations where territory and bugs are unfamiliar). Keep kits at home and in the car. Although this drug may stop a reaction and make you seem alright, it is very important to go to your doctor anyway as soon as possible to be sure. In some cases, the epinephrine is not enough and intravenous fluids or other treatments are needed. **All cases of anaphylactic shock – or suspected cases – should report to the emergency room immediately!** The longer you wait, the more damaging the effects.

If you or someone you know or live with is at risk of going into anaphylactic shock, it is important to know how to use the self-injectable antidote epinephrine.

## Signs of Anaphylactic Shock:

Reactions of this kind usually occur seconds or minutes after the sting is received, although a few cases have not reacted for up to 12 hours. When one goes into anaphylactic shock, the blood vessels dilate and begin to leak into the surrounding tissues and may affect some organs. Below are signs and symptoms to look for:

- The skin is the first place to look. Hives, itching, swelling, redness and a stinging or burning sensation may appear. On the flip side, skin may also appear extremely pale.
- Because the blood vessels are leaking, a person may feel lightheaded or faint. Some people will lose consciousness because of a rapid drop in blood pressure.
- Sometimes the throat, nose, and mouth become swollen and breathing passages become obstructed. The first signs of this are usually hoarseness or a lump in the throat. In some cases, the swelling is so bad the air supply is cut off, and the person experiences severe respiratory distress.
- Another respiratory problem could be the constricting of the airways, giving someone chest tightness, wheezing and shortness of breath commonly associated with asthma.
- People may experience cramping (in women, pelvic cramps may develop), diarrhea and nausea, and vomiting.
- Especially if the allergen was swallowed, the gastrointestinal tract often reacts.
- Sweating
- Rapid pulse

## **Causes of Anaphylactic Shock:**

It is important to note that this allergic reaction (which, again, is very rare) is not caused only by bee stings. This reaction can be sparked by an injection, inhaling, swallowing, and being exposed to an allergen that the person is known to be allergic to. Injected allergens could be bee stings, as mentioned, certain vaccines prepared on an egg medium, penicillin, dyes used in diagnostic x-rays, and allergen extracts used in the diagnosis and treatment of allergic conditions. They can also be sparked by food allergies, even if only a small bite is taken. Skin contact with foods rarely causes an anaphylactic reaction. Foods that are commonly associated with this reaction are peanuts and nuts, seafood, and in children particularly, eggs and cows milk. Inhaled anaphylactic reactions are rare, but have occurred from the inhalation of particles from rubber and latex gloves.