

# If you are having a severe allergic reaction, you need epinephrine first and fast

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If you are one of the millions of Americans who experiences a severe allergic reaction to food, latex or an insect sting, you should know the first line of defense in combating the reaction is epinephrine. Unfortunately, not all medical personnel know how important epinephrine is in bringing an allergic reaction under control.

According to new guidelines published in the *Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology*, the scientific publication of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI), the fast administration of [epinephrine](#) is essential to the treatment of a severe allergic reaction.

"Since [emergency department](#) physicians are often the first to see patients who are suffering from anaphylaxis, it's especially important that they not only correctly diagnose the problem, but understand that epinephrine should be administered as soon as possible," said Ronna L. Campbell, MD, PhD, an emergency department physician and lead author on the guidelines. "In addition, following a severe, allergic reaction, patients should be referred to an allergist, as allergists provide the most comprehensive follow-up care and guidance."

Anaphylaxis symptoms occur suddenly and can progress quickly. The early symptoms may be mild, such as a runny nose, a skin rash or a "strange feeling," but these symptoms can quickly lead to more serious problems, including trouble breathing, hives or swelling, tightness of the throat, nausea, abdominal pain or even cardiac arrest. Anaphylaxis can be fatal if left untreated.

According to the new guidelines, there is virtually no reason not to use epinephrine on a patient believed to be suffering a severe allergic reaction.

"The collaboration between emergency department personnel and allergists is vital," said Stanley Fineman, MD, ACAAI past president. "At our

recent Annual Scientific Meeting, we convened an anaphylaxis roundtable discussion between emergency room physicians and allergists. We discussed how, together, we can get the word out about the importance of rapid epinephrine administration for those suffering from anaphylaxis. It's a message we want to get out to everyone dealing with severe allergies."

A recent study released at the 2014 ACAAI Annual Scientific Meeting showed that not all doctors know that epinephrine needs to be used first when treating an allergic reaction. Another recent study presented at the ACAAI Annual Scientific Meeting proved that emergency supplies of epinephrine in schools save lives.

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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