

EPI PEN:

You have been prescribed a self-injecting epinephrine device for allergic emergencies. The following information will help you understand the importance of having your Epi Pen with you and how it works.

Epinephrine is safe, and you already have epinephrine in your body.

Epinephrine is a naturally occurring hormone. It is the hormone that is part of our fight or flight response. When you are scared, excited, or exercising, your epinephrine levels surge. Even when you are sleeping there is a little epinephrine circulating in your body. An injection from your Epi Pen will increase your level of epinephrine to the degree seen under stressful circumstances. Since you have at some point in your life experienced stress, you have already been exposed to the effects of high levels of epinephrine.

If you were given the injection right now, all that would likely happen is that your heart rate and blood pressure would increase to a moderate degree and that you might feel slightly shaky. Epinephrine is metabolized very quickly, and you would not feel these effects for long.

When Should I use my Epi Pen.

Anaphylaxis is a potentially severe or life-threatening allergic reaction that can occur very quickly, even within a couple minutes of exposure to the allergen.

Not everyone with an anaphylaxis reaction will experience the same thing, but common symptoms include hives, itching, flushing and swelling of the lips, tongue and roof of the mouth.

The airway is often affected, resulting in tightness of the throat, chest tightness and difficulty breathing. These life-threatening allergic reactions can also be accompanied by chest pain, low blood pressure, dizziness and headaches.

Use your Epi Pen at the first sign of anaphylaxis. A delay in administering epinephrine can be life-threatening.

How to Use Your Epi Pen

Each Epi Pen contains only one dose of epinephrine.

Hold Epi Pen in your fist with orange tip down.

Pull off Blue Safety release cap from top end.

Press orange end firmly to outer thigh at a 90 degree angle until you hear a click. Then hold in place for 10 seconds. It can be injected through your clothing if needed.

Remove Epi Pen from leg and massage injection site with other hand for 10 seconds.

Carefully put used Epi Pen, orange end first into the carrying case. Note the lid will not close. Avoid putting your thumb, fingers or hand over the orange tip. Dispose of used Epi Pen at ER or Doctor's Office.

Call 911 or go to the ER for follow up care.

Remember to monitor expiration dates located on side of your Epi Pen.

Why You Should Go to the Emergency Room After using the Epi Pen.

You should **always** be checked out at the ER after using your Epi Pen. That is not because of the epinephrine, but because the allergic reaction probably requires further monitoring. Many patients also need more than one dose of epinephrine or other emergency treatments. This could be due to the severity of the allergic reaction or simply because the Epi Pen was not used correctly. The most common mistake is not holding the device against your thigh for at least a count to 10, allowing the full dose of epinephrine to be delivered.

Another Epinephrine Injection device that is available is called **Auvi-Q**. Talk with your allergist about what device is best for you.