

Epinephrine - Patient Information

Injectable epinephrine (also known as adrenalin) is the most important medication to have available for the treatment of a severe allergic reaction (e.g. anaphylaxis). It is a natural hormone that is a part of the “fight-or-flight” response. Epinephrine helps to reduce the symptoms of an allergic reaction, including:

- opens bronchial passages (bronchodilation)
- decreases hives and swelling of the throat/tongue and increases blood pressure (vasoconstriction)

Epinephrine for self-administration may be prescribed by your provider when you have a history of having (or you potentially could have) a severe allergic reaction. Allergic reactions may occur with foods, insect stings, allergy shots or medications. It may also be prescribed if you have severe asthma.

Epinephrine for self-administration is available in the following forms:

- EpiPen Auto Injector (single dose of 0.3 mg of epinephrine; for patients who weigh about 55 or more pounds)
- EpiPen Jr. Auto Injector (single dose of 0.15 mg of epinephrine; for patients who weigh under 66 pounds)

Side effects may include shakiness, nervousness, nausea, vomiting, headache, paleness, rapid/strong heartbeat, sweating, and dizziness. Rarely, irregular heartbeat, chest pain, and/or heart attack may occur. Epinephrine is metabolized quickly and side effects should not last long.

Remember that epinephrine is used for the following:

- With a life-threatening allergic reaction
- With ingestion of known allergen and history of anaphylaxis or asthma
- With severe asthma episode

Call 911 or go to nearest emergency facility after using epinephrine because more than one dose of epinephrine or other emergency treatments may be needed.

A second dose of epinephrine may be needed if the allergy symptoms are not improving within 5-20 minutes.

It is important not to delay administration of epinephrine in order to achieve the most optimal outcome.