

# Allergic Reaction

Allergies happen when your body reacts to something it's sensitive to, called an 'allergen.' You might encounter an allergen by touching it, swallowing it, or breathing it in. People can be allergic to things like food, medicines, bug bites/stings, and things around you like pollen and dust. Allergic reactions can be mild or severe. A severe reaction is called anaphylaxis. This can happen within minutes or up to an hour after being exposed to an allergen.

## What to Expect

### Mild symptoms include:

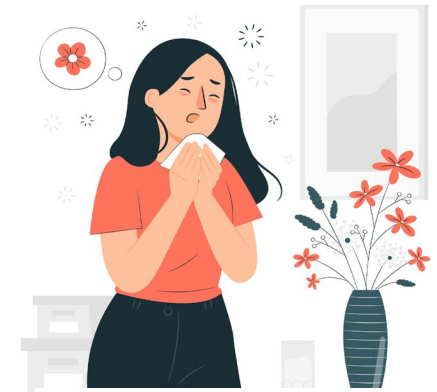
- Skin changes (itchiness, redness, rash)
- Sneezing or runny nose
- Watery, red, and itchy eyes

### Severe symptoms include:

- Difficulty breathing
- Fast heartbeat and chest tightness
- Fainting or lightheadedness
- Swelling of your face, throat, or tongue
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or belly pain

If you are having severe or worsening symptoms, it is important that you go to the emergency department.

You can react to something that has not caused allergies for you before. An allergic reaction can occur right away, or it could be many hours after you come in contact with an allergen.



Designed by Freepik

### Recommended Follow-Up

- Follow up in \_\_\_ days.

Name of Provider

Reason

Date/Time

Location

Contact Info

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## When to Get Help

### Use your epinephrine and call 911 if:

Your allergy symptoms are worsening OR severe symptoms mentioned above including:

- Difficulty breathing.
- Fainting or lightheadedness.
- Chest tightness or fast heartbeat.
- Swelling of your throat, tongue, mouth, or face.

### Go to a walk-in clinic, your health care provider, or call 811 (711) if:

- Your mild allergy symptoms (including rash, hives, or itchy skin). are not improving with antihistamines.

### To Learn More:

- Ask your health care provider.
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)



## How to Care for Yourself at Home

- Avoid contact with the substance that caused your allergic reaction. If you are not sure, you may need to keep a diary to find out what caused your reaction.
- For mild allergic reactions, you might be asked to take a medication called an 'antihistamine'.
- For skin changes, you can try a cool bath, or cold compresses.
- If you had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), you may have been given a prescription for an epinephrine injection (e.g., EpiPen<sup>®</sup>, EpiPen Jr<sup>®</sup>, Allerject<sup>®</sup> or Emerade<sup>®</sup>).
  - + Fill this prescription at the pharmacy as soon as you leave the emergency department.
  - + Always carry this medicine with you.

## USING YOUR EPINEPHRINE INJECTION

- If you experience severe symptoms, call 911 and inject your epinephrine immediately.
- Even if you feel better after using your epinephrine, you will need to go to the emergency department.
- You might need to use this medicine a second time if you still feel unwell 5 minutes after you use the first.
- Sometimes, you might experience a second reaction even after leaving the hospital. This can happen up to 48 hours after your first reaction.
- Refer to the instructions on your epinephrine self-injection device for information on how to use it.



## Medications

Depending on your allergic reaction, your doctor may recommend or prescribe one of these medications.

For mild allergic reactions, take antihistamines. Non-sedating antihistamines work well, including:

- Loratadine (Claritin®)
- Cetirizine (Reactine®)
- Desloratadine (Aerius®)
- Fexofenadine (Allegra®)
- Bilastine (Blexten®)
- Rupatadine (Rupall®)

Find this information sheet on the ECBC website:

[https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical\\_resource/patient-information-sheet/allergic-reaction-anaphylaxis/](https://emergencycarebc.ca/clinical_resource/patient-information-sheet/allergic-reaction-anaphylaxis/)

## Notes:

### Additional Information

- Anaphylaxis and food allergies: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/more/health-features/severe-allergic-reaction-anaphylaxis>
- Managing allergies: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/illnesses-conditions/allergies/allergic-reaction>
- How to use epinephrine injectors (step-by-step): <https://foodallergycanada.ca/to-ols-and-downloads/downloads/emergency-plan-forms/>
- Anaphylaxis action plan for kids: <https://www.handouts.ca/pdfs/Anaphylaxis%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

### Tell Us What You Think!

Have feedback about this document? Use the form at: [bit.ly/pdsfeedback](https://bit.ly/pdsfeedback)

