



Allergic Reactions

Signs of allergic reactions include difficulty breathing, wheezing, swollen lips, face, tongue and occasionally hives, skin redness, swelling or itching. Many allergic reactions are mild and can be treated at home, while others can be severe and life-threatening. Substances that do not bother most of us (such as venom from bee stings and various foods, medications and pollens) can trigger allergic reactions in some people. Repeated exposures may lead to more serious reactions. Once a person is sensitized (has had a previous sensitivity reaction), even a limited exposure to a small amount of allergen can trigger a severe reaction. Allergic reactions vary from mild to serious. They can be confined to a small area of the body or they may affect the entire body.

For a mild to moderate reaction:

1. Calm and reassure the person with the reaction. Try to identify the allergen and have the person avoid further contact with it. If the allergic reaction is from a bee sting, scrape the stinger off the skin with something firm (such as a fingernail or a plastic credit card). Do not use tweezers as squeezing the stinger will release more venom.
2. If the person develops an itchy rash, apply calamine lotion or Benadryl type cream and cool compresses. Avoid medicated lotions.
3. Watch for signs of increasing distress.



For a severe allergic reaction:

1. Check the person's airway, breathing and circulation (the ABC's of Basic Life Support). A warning sign for dangerous throat swelling is a very hoarse, whispered voice or coarse sounds when the person is breathing air in. If the victim is having difficulty breathing, is weak, or is losing consciousness, call 9-1-1 for emergency medical assistance immediately. If patient is not breathing normally, begin CPR starting with chest compressions
2. Calm and reassure the person.
3. If the allergic reaction is from a bee sting, scrape the stinger off the skin with something firm (such as a fingernail or plastic credit card). Do not use tweezers as squeezing the stinger will release more venom.
4. Call 911 if you are stung in the mouth or nose as swelling may block the airway and prevent proper breathing.
5. If the person has an Epi pen, help the person take or inject the medication. Avoid oral medication if the person is having difficulty breathing.
6. Begin CPR if the person loses consciousness or if they are not breathing normally.