AAIS (EPIPEN) USE & SEVERE ALLERGY RESPONSE

TRANSCRIPT



Extent **Digital Learning** *Language* **English** *Seat Time* **30 mins**

iosh approved e-learning bitesize course

CPD CERTIFIED The CPD Certification Service

Introduction

A normal school day. Or so it seems. What begins as a normal day can change in a moment. A child eats, touches, or breathes in something they're allergic to, and suddenly… they're in real danger.

Allergic reactions are common. But sometimes, people don't even know they have them until they're exposed to the trigger. And when reactions are severe, they can be life-threatening. Would you recognise the signs and know what to do next?

This bite-sized course will help you learn how to spot the signs of an allergic reaction and anaphylaxis. It uses interactive learning to help you understand how to respond quickly and correctly in an emergency. And, you'll see how to use an adrenaline auto-injector safely, when every second counts.

Take this course to act fast, stay calm, and save a life.

1. – What is an allergy?

An allergy is the body's immune system reacting to something that's usually harmless. This substance is called an allergen. For most people, allergens, like certain foods or pollen, cause no problems. But for someone with an allergy, the body treats them as a threat.

When this happens, the immune system releases chemicals, including histamine. These chemicals cause the symptoms of an allergic reaction. These symptoms can be mild. For example, itching, redness, or swelling. But they can also become severe.

Anaphylaxis is the most serious type of allergic reaction. It can happen very quickly and affect the whole body. It may cause breathing difficulties, swelling of the throat, or a sudden drop in blood pressure. Without immediate treatment, it can be life-threatening.

In a school environment, it's important for all staff to understand that even mild symptoms can get worse quickly. Early action can save someone's life. Allergic reactions are often triggered by everyday substances. The most common triggers in schools are foods. These include peanuts, tree nuts such as almonds, walnuts, and cashews, milk, eggs, and wheat.

Other triggers include:

- Insect stings, such as from bees and wasps
- Latex, found in some gloves, balloons, or from natural sources such as certain flowers
- Certain medications
- Environmental allergens, like pollen or dust

Reactions can happen through eating, touching, or sometimes just breathing in an allergen. They can also worsen with factors like exercise, stress, or illness. Because of this, allergies can be unpredictable. That's why it's essential to recognise what's happening and be ready to act.

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2.01 – Recognising and responding to an emergency

Anaphylaxis is a medical emergency. It can develop within minutes and worsen extremely quickly. Recognising the signs early is critical. So, where do you start?

Look for problems with breathing. That might include wheezing, coughing, or struggling to breathe. Check for a swelling of the tongue or throat. A child may have difficulty speaking or swallowing, or may sound hoarse.

Next, be alert for any changes in awareness. Are they feeling dizzy or confused, or have they collapsed? You may also notice pale, clammy skin or a rapid, weak pulse. If you see any of these signs, treat the situation as anaphylaxis and act immediately.

To help you stay calm and focused, you can follow the ABCDE approach:

A is for Airway.

Is the airway clear? Look for swelling or obstruction.

B is for Breathing.

Are they breathing normally? Listen for wheezing or laboured breathing.

C is for Circulation.

Check for signs of poor circulation, such as paler skin. Check their pulse, and look for signs of collapse.

D is for Disability.

Are they responsive? Check their consciousness.
If they're awake but confused, this might indicate a lack of oxygen.

E is for Exposure.

Look for visible signs, such as hives, swelling, or redness.

This approach helps you assess the situation quickly and systematically. But assessment alone isn't enough.

If you suspect someone is suffering from anaphylaxis, you must act without delay.

3.05 – School procedures and storage

Knowing how to respond in an anaphylaxis emergency is essential, but prevention, preparation, and clear procedures are just as important. In a school setting, everyone has a role to play in keeping pupils safe. That means understanding your school's procedures, knowing where medication is stored, and being ready to act at any time.

Adrenaline auto-injectors must be stored correctly to remain effective. They should be kept at room temperature, away from direct sunlight and extreme heat or cold. Do NOT store them in fridges or locked cupboards. They must be easy to access, clearly labelled, and known to all staff. This could be in a staffroom, a classroom medical cabinet, or first aid area. When every second counts, staff need to know where medication is, or valuable time is lost.

Schools should also carry out regular checks. It must be someone's responsibility (set out in your procedures) to monitor AAI expiry dates, because adrenaline becomes less effective over time. That responsible person should keep a central record of expiry dates.

Pupils with severe allergies will likely have their own AAI that they bring to school and store there. It's good practice to label these devices with the pupil's name and photograph. Many schools keep spare auto-injectors on hand for use if a pupil's own device is unavailable.

All staff, including temporary staff, should know which pupils have allergies, be aware of where medication is stored, and be trained on how to use an AAI. These procedures support both safety and inclusion. With the right systems in place, pupils with allergies can fully participate in school life. Trips, lessons, and activities can all go ahead safely, with the right planning in place. Knowing your procedures and being prepared makes that possible.

4.01 – What schools must do

Schools have both a legal and a moral duty to protect pupils with allergies. This means taking reasonable steps to prevent harm, such as banning known allergens, and being prepared to respond in an emergency.

In England, this responsibility is supported by national guidance and legislation. This includes the duty to support pupils with medical conditions, and to ensure staff are properly trained to deal with them. Recent changes, referred to as Benedict's Law, strengthen these expectations.

They require schools to:

- Have clear allergy policies in place
- Provide regular training for staff
- Ensure access to emergency medication, including AAIs

Schools must also maintain accurate records, including Individual Healthcare Plans, which outline a pupil's allergies, triggers, and emergency response. These plans help ensure that everyone knows what to do and when to act.

Summary