

Medical Management of Vaccine Reactions in Adult Patients

All vaccines have the potential to cause an adverse reaction. In order to minimize adverse reactions, patients should be carefully screened for precautions and contraindications before vaccine is administered. Even with careful screening, reactions may occur. These reactions can vary from trivial and inconvenient (e.g., soreness, itching) to severe and life threatening (e.g., anaphylaxis). If reactions occur, staff should be prepared with procedures for their management. The table below describes procedures to follow for various reactions that may occur.

Reaction	Symptoms	Management
Localized	Soreness, redness, itching, or swelling at the injection site	Apply a cold compress to the injection site. Consider giving an analgesic or antipruritic medication.
	Slight bleeding	Apply an adhesive compress over the injection site.
	Continuous bleeding	Place thick layer of gauze pads over site and maintain direct and firm pressure; raise the bleeding injection site (e.g., arm) above the level of the patient's heart.
Psychological fright and syncope (fainting)	Fright before injection is given	Have patient sit or lie down for the vaccination.
	Extreme paleness, sweating, coldness of the hands and feet, nausea, light-headedness, dizziness, weakness, or visual disturbances	Have patient lie flat or sit with head between knees for several minutes. Loosen any tight clothing and maintain an open airway. Apply cool, damp cloths to face and neck.
	Fall, without loss of consciousness	Examine the patient to determine if injury is present before attempting to move the patient. Place patient flat on back with feet elevated.
	Loss of consciousness	Check the patient to determine if injury is present before attempting to move the patient. Place patient flat on back with feet elevated. Call 911 if patient does not recover immediately.
Anaphylaxis	Sudden or gradual onset of generalized itching, erythema (redness), or urticaria (hives); angioedema (swelling of the lips, face, or throat); severe bronchospasm (wheezing); shortness of breath; shock; abdominal cramping; or cardiovascular collapse.	See "Emergency Medical Protocol for Management of Anaphylactic Reactions in Adults" on the next page for detailed steps to follow in treating anaphylaxis.

(see information on page 2)

Emergency Medical Protocol for Management of Anaphylactic Reactions in Adults

Supplies Needed

- Aqueous epinephrine USP, 1:1000, in ampules, prefilled syringes, vials of solution, or an Epi-Pen. If an Epi-Pen is to be stocked, at least three adult Epi-Pens (delivering a single dose of 0.3 mg/0.3 mL) should be available whenever adult immunizations are given.
- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) injectable (50 mg/mL solution) and oral in 25 or 50 mg tablets
- Syringes: 1–3 cc, 22–25g, 1"-1½"-2" needles for epinephrine and diphenhydramine (Benadryl)
- Adult airways (small, medium, and large)
- Sphygmomanometer (adult and extra-large cuffs) and stethoscope
- Adult size pocket mask with one-way valve
- Alcohol swabs
- Tourniquet
- Tongue depressors
- Flashlight with extra batteries (for evaluating the mouth and throat)

Signs and Symptoms of Anaphylactic Reaction

Sudden or gradual onset of generalized itching, erythema (redness), or urticaria (hives); angioedema (swelling of the lips, face, or throat); bronchospasm (wheezing); shortness of breath; shock; abdominal cramping; or cardiovascular collapse.

Treatment in Adults

- a. If itching and swelling are confined to the injection site where the vaccination was given, observe patient closely for the development of generalized symptoms.
- b. If symptoms are generalized, activate the emergency medical system (EMS; e.g., call 911) and notify the on-call physician. This should be done by a second person, while the primary nurse evaluates and manages the patient.
- c. Administer (1:1000) aqueous epinephrine IM, 0.01 mL/kg/dose, 0.3 to 0.5 mL (maximum single dose is 0.5 mL)
- d. In addition, for systemic anaphylaxis, administer diphenhydramine 50–100 mg orally or 50–100 mg IM (1–2 mg/kg, 100 mg maximum single dose).
- e. Monitor the patient closely until EMS arrives. Perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), if necessary, and maintain airway. Keep patient in supine position unless he or she is having breathing difficulty. If breathing is difficult, patient's head may be elevated, provided blood pressure is adequate to prevent loss of consciousness. If blood pressure is low, elevate legs. Monitor blood pressure and pulse every 5 minutes.
- f. If EMS has not arrived and symptoms are still present, repeat dose of epinephrine every 10–20 minutes for up to 3 doses, depending on patient's response.
- g. Record all vital signs, medications administered to the patient, including the time, dosage, response, and the name of the medical personnel who administered the medication, and other relevant clinical information.
- h. Notify the patient's primary care physician.

Sources: American Academy of Pediatrics. Passive Immunization. In: Pickering LK, ed. *Red Book: 2003 Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases*. 26th ed. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2003:63-66.
American Pharmacists Association, Grabenstein, JD, *Pharmacy-Based Immunization Delivery*, 2002.
Got Your Shots? A Providers Guide to Immunizations in Minnesota, Second Edition, Minnesota Department of Health, 2001:80-82.

These standing orders for the medical management of vaccine reactions in adult patients shall remain in effect for patients of the _____ until rescinded or until _____.

name of clinic

date

Medical Director's signature

Effective date