



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Becoming More Independent in Managing your Allergies

Information for patients, relatives and carers

## Child Health

① For more information, please contact:

Paediatric Allergy Specialist Nurses

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# **Becoming more independent**

As you get older and more independent you will start to manage your allergies yourself with support from your family or carers. This leaflet contains information and tips to make you aware of your allergy medication, manage your allergies when out and about and help control your symptoms.

Prior to you managing your allergies independently you can take the lead in situations whilst still being supported by an adult e.g. ordering in restaurants, talking to doctors at your appointment, organising repeat prescriptions, etc.

It is important that you are aware of all your allergies and how to manage them through avoidance and the use of your prescribed medication. It is advised to make your friends aware of your allergies and your medications so that they are aware that they may need to get help if you have an allergic reaction.

There are a number of different websites that provide many different types of medical alert jewellery that you could wear to alert people to your allergies if required.

# Recognising an allergic reaction

It is important that you can recognise the different types of allergic reaction and what to do to treat them.

Allergic reaction can be separated into **two** main types, mild/moderate and severe (anaphylactic).

Without appropriate management, a mild reaction may progress to a severe reaction.

## Mild/Moderate Allergic Reactions

Signs and symptoms of these types of reaction include one or more of the following:

- Rash/hives (red raised, itchy bumps) anywhere on the body
- Swelling of the lips, eyes or face
- Stomach pain, nausea, vomiting
- Itching/tingling of your mouth and tongue

For these types of reaction you will need to take an oral antihistamine. This can take 15-20 minutes to start to work so please be aware that you may need to give yourself further treatment if you begin to feel worse before it has had a chance to work.

## Severe Allergic Reactions (Anaphylaxis)

You may have some of the symptoms of the reactions mentioned before, however signs and symptoms of a severe reaction include:

- Difficulty/noisy breathing/persistent cough
- Swelling of tongue
- Throat feeling tight and/or difficulty swallowing
- Blue tongue
- Feeling light headed
- Feeling of impending doom

For these types of reactions you need to administer an adrenaline auto-injector (EpiPen, Emerade or Jext), if prescribed, and call 999. **This can be administered by yourself or someone else who has been trained to use it. If you have not already taken your antihistamine, you should take it.**

You may not have been prescribed an adrenaline auto-injector, so you need to call 999 straight away and get emergency treatment as quickly as possible. Sit or lie down and if possible have someone stay with you until the ambulance arrives.

If you have asthma and develop wheeze or a cough, then you can take up to 10 puffs of your reliever inhaler (usually blue) ideally with your spacer.

Be familiar with your own personalised allergy management plan which outlines the management of an allergic reaction. You should try to keep a copy with your emergency medications.

# Allergy medications

## Oral Antihistamines

Oral antihistamines are used in mild to moderate reactions and should be carried around with you at all times in case required. It is important that you know which medication and dose you are on. These may be taken regularly during the Spring/Summer months to help control your hay fever symptoms or taken as required in the event of an allergic reaction.

If you do take an antihistamine regularly due to allergic rhinitis/hay fever then a one off extra dose can be taken for an allergic reaction to something else or some patients may have an alternative antihistamine to take in this situation.

## Adrenaline Auto-Injectors

If you have been prescribed an Adrenaline Auto-Injector (EpiPen, Emerade or Jext) you need to carry these around with you at all times. These are used in a severe allergic reaction, otherwise known as an anaphylactic reaction, and you need to be confident on how to administer your pen if needed. If you ever need to use your adrenaline auto-injector you need to call 999 after administering it and be observed in hospital for at least six hours as further treatment can be given and you can be observed for any delayed reactions that may occur.

If you are ever prescribed a different pen you need to be trained on how to use the other device as they all have slight differences. Below is a list of the websites for the different pens which each have information video on how to administer the pens.

The Paediatric Allergy Specialist Nurses can be contacted to arrange one to one training if required for a new device or as a refresher for your current device.

- **EpiPen** – [www.epipen.co.uk/patients](http://www.epipen.co.uk/patients)
- **Jext** – [www.jext.co.uk](http://www.jext.co.uk)
- **Emerade** – [www.emerade-bausch.co.uk](http://www.emerade-bausch.co.uk)



## Nasal sprays

Nasal sprays are taken regularly during the Spring/Summer months to help control allergic rhinitis. It is important you have a good technique, as a common side effect is nose bleeds if not given effectively.

Instructions are given below:

1. Shake the bottle before use.
2. Clear your nose by gently blowing it.
3. Bend your head forward.
4. Hold your nasal spray in the opposite hand to the nostril in which you are about to apply the spray.
5. Using the opposite hand to nostril, place the end of the spray bottle just inside the nostril aiming away from the septum (middle of the nose.)
6. Activate the spray. DO NOT sniff, inhale through the nose slowly and steadily.
7. Change hands and repeat action in the other nostril. You shouldn't be able to taste the spray as it should stay in your nose.

# Asthma management

If you have asthma it is important that you try and keep this well controlled. If you have allergies, poorly controlled asthma can be exacerbated by your allergies but also cause more severe breathing problems in an allergic reaction.

You should have a routine annual asthma review. If your asthma is not controlled you may need a review sooner.

Signs that your asthma is not under control are:

- three or more days a week with symptoms (such as: wheezing, cough, chest tightness, breathlessness)
- using your reliever inhaler (usually blue) two or more times a week
- one or more nights a week with awakening due to asthma.

Your nurse or doctor should provide you with a Personalised Asthma Action Plan (PAAP) and update this with you regularly.

## **Inhalers and asthma medications**

Most people who are diagnosed with asthma will be prescribed a preventer inhaler (usually brown, purple or orange coloured). These types of inhalers contain a steroid medication which helps to reduce inflammation and swelling in your airways. Using an inhaler device means the medication get to your airways more easily.

Some people take oral preventer medications alongside their inhaled medications also.

You need to take your preventer medications every day, even when you are well and it means you are less likely to react as badly to your asthma triggers.

If you are prescribed a metered dose inhaler (MDIs) they should be taken with a spacer. A spacer helps get the right amount of medication to your airways. Without a spacer the medication in the MDI will not be as effective.

There are also other inhaler devices that contain the same medication but are dry powder inhalers (DPI's) or breath actuated inhalers (BAI's). You should know how to use your inhaler correctly. If you are unsure please speak to your doctor or nurse.

The Asthma UK website also has excellent videos you can watch to help with your inhaler technique.

[www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/](http://www.asthma.org.uk/advice/inhaler-videos/)

Alongside your preventer inhaler you should be prescribed a reliever inhaler (usually blue), you should carry this with you at all times (with a spacer also if it is a MDI).

A reliever inhaler works quickly to relax muscles in your airways so you can breathe more easily.

You should use your reliever inhaler if you have symptoms such as wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness. You should follow and understand your Personalised Asthma Action Plan as this will guide you on managing your asthma. If you are unsure speak to your doctor or nurse as soon as possible.

# **Asthma management during an allergic reaction**

If you have an allergic reaction and you have become wheezy because of it administer your allergy medication first, adrenaline auto-injector or oral antihistamines, and then take up to 10 puffs of your reliever inhaler (usually blue).

**If you have had to give your adrenaline auto-injector, regardless of if you have had to use your inhaler as well, you need to call 999 and be observed in hospital.**

If you have taken your oral antihistamines and had to have 10 puffs of your reliever inhaler - you need to seek a medical review either with your GP or local A&E depending on how effective they were.

# Food labelling

## Always ready the ingredients list

It is important to always read the ingredients label of food products. If an item contains one of the top 14 allergens then it has to state it in the ingredients label, usually in **bold** but may be in *italics* or underlined. It is also important to check the product label every time as recipes can change. Be aware of food items that are not pre-packed, such as food from a bakery, café or deli counter as these products will not have labels with the information you need.

## 'May Contain' Products

Some products will have the term 'may contain...' on their labels. This means that even though the product does not include the item the manufacturer will not guarantee there is no chance of cross contamination from other items in the factory/production line. Some people with food allergies will avoid these products while others feel confident to assess the possible risk of the product causing a reaction and make a decision on if it is safe to eat. It is advisable that if you do decide to eat 'may contain' products that you have your allergy medication available in case of a reaction and not to eat them if you are unwell.

## Natasha's Law

From April 2021 any allergen even in small quantities should be highlighted on wrapping

# Products that can initially be deceiving

The list below shows a few examples of some food items that people do not realise contain allergens. This is not a complete list and not all types and brands of these products will contain the allergens stated. It is worth checking a new product to see what it contains and also it is advised to re-check products regularly to ensure recipes haven't been changed.

- Cooking oil (nuts)
- Curries (nuts)
- Chocolates and confectionary (nuts/egg/milk)
- Baked goods (milk/egg/nuts)
- Crisps (milk)
- Cereals (nuts/milk)
- Biscuits/crackers (milk)
- Drugs/medication (milk)
- Batter (milk/egg)
- Soap (milk)
- Sausages (milk/egg)
- Pasta (egg)

## **Cross contamination**

Cross contamination is where trace amounts of an allergen that is not meant to be in a food may have gotten into a dish or food product. It is important when getting food from somewhere where multiple open foods are stored together (e.g. buffet, salad bar or market stall) to try and ensure that these foods have not been mixed together if there is something in the environment that you are allergic too. Even though these may be in small amounts some people can still react to these small quantities. This is another reason it is important to carry your allergy rescue medication with you at all times.



# Eating out

Most restaurants will state on their menus if their dishes contain any allergens, however if you are in any doubt then ask as some dishes may contain allergens you may not think they would contain. Also do not assume that a dish will be made the same in different restaurants. You, or your parent/carer, should always speak to the chef who will prepare your meal. You should advise the staff of your allergies when you enter the restaurant. They should have measures in place to reduce the risk of cross contamination if allergens are present in the kitchen and it allows them to be extra vigilant.

Some restaurants can be more high-risk than others. For example Asian restaurants will use more nuts in the dishes than others; also buffets are potentially high-risk due to cross contamination.

Don't be afraid to speak up about your allergies when eating out. You can practice this when out with your parent/carers, asking questions of the waiting staff and making them aware of any allergies.

# Useful resources for people with allergies

## Paediatric Allergy Specialist Nursing Team York Hospital

Specialist Nurse Mob – 07984291824

Allergy Support Worker - 07824452313

Email - yhs-tr.paedrespiratorynursesyork@nhs.net

### Websites:

#### **Allergy UK** – [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)

The website provides support, advice and information for those living with allergies. Website has factsheets on a number of allergy topics.

- Helpline – 01322 619898
- Email – [info@allergyuk.org](mailto:info@allergyuk.org)

#### **Anaphylaxis Campaign** – [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)

The website provides online resources, help and support for people at risk of severe allergy reactions.

- Helpline – 01252 542029
- Email - [info@anaphylaxis.org.uk](mailto:info@anaphylaxis.org.uk)

#### **Asthma UK** – [www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)

The website provides support and advice on managing your asthma

- Helpline – 0300 222 5800
- Email – [info@asthma.org.uk](mailto:info@asthma.org.uk)

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

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## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email  
[pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

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或發電

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