Adrenaline (Epinephrine) Autoinjectors For General Use

Adrenaline (epinephrine) autoinjectors (e.g. EpiPen®) are approved for use in Australia and New Zealand for the emergency treatment of anaphylaxis, the most severe form of allergic reaction.

ASCIA cannot dictate policy regarding the use of adrenaline autoinjectors for general use that are not prescribed for an individual person. Advice from the local education and/or health authorities should be sought regarding authorisation to include adrenaline autoinjectors for general use in first aid kits, and whether these can be administered in an emergency.

Having an adrenaline autoinjector for general use (e.g. in first aid kits) should be considered as being additional to the prescribed adrenaline autoinjectors and should NOT be a substitute for people at high risk of anaphylaxis having their own prescribed adrenaline autoinjector/s.

Adrenaline autoinjectors for general use are most likely to be used when:

- An person who is known to be at risk of anaphylaxis does not have their own device immediately accessible, or the device is out of date.
- A second dose of adrenaline is required before an ambulance has arrived.
- An person’s device has misfired or accidentally been discharged.
- A previously diagnosed person with mild allergy who was not prescribed an adrenaline autoinjector has their first episode of anaphylaxis.
- An undiagnosed person is having their first episode of anaphylaxis, and was not previously known to be at risk (e.g. a child having their first reaction at school). This is dependent on (a) local policies that allow administration under those circumstances, and (b) education of caregivers about the recognition of anaphylaxis and training in adrenaline autoinjector administration.

Using another person’s adrenaline autoinjector device

ASCIA does not have published information or guidelines on using another person’s adrenaline autoinjector in an anaphylaxis emergency. It is unlikely that these can be developed whilst there is still inconsistency in the regulations regarding giving non-prescribed adrenaline autoinjectors in Australia and New Zealand.

The following is general advice, not an official ASCIA Guideline:

- If another person’s adrenaline autoinjector is used in an anaphylaxis emergency, when there is no adrenaline autoinjector for general use available, it would be essential that the device is immediately replaced by the institution, purchasing the same brand of adrenaline autoinjector at a local pharmacy.
- If the person whose adrenaline autoinjector has been used has anaphylaxis before their adrenaline autoinjector is replaced, they should be taken immediately to hospital by ambulance. If the person is not insured for the ambulance cost, this expense should be covered by the institution.

Availability

- Adrenaline autoinjectors are available from pharmacies without a prescription at full price.
- In Australia, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listing for adrenaline autoinjectors allows for authority prescriptions of a maximum quantity of two adrenaline autoinjectors (EpiPen) for children or adults (no repeats). They are available at a subsidised cost when prescribed by doctors or nurse practitioners for persons considered to be at high risk of anaphylaxis.
- In New Zealand, adrenaline autoinjectors are not currently subsidised by Pharmac.
• All adrenaline autoinjectors, whether they are prescribed or for general use, can only be used once and should be replaced by the expiry date, or immediately after they are used.

**Administration**

• It is reasonable for a person without specific first aid training in anaphylaxis to administer an adrenaline autoinjector in an emergency if there is no other person nearby who has had basic training in the use of an adrenaline autoinjector.

• The person administering first aid should have reasonable grounds for believing that the person is having an acute allergic reaction. Symptoms and signs of anaphylaxis are shown on the ASCIA First Aid Plan for Anaphylaxis (ORANGE), which should be stored with an adrenaline autoinjector for general use.

• Instructions for giving an adrenaline autoinjector are shown on the barrel of the device, package insert and the device specific ASCIA First Aid Plan for Anaphylaxis and ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis.

• If a person is in doubt, an adrenaline autoinjector should be given, as outlined on the ASCIA First Aid Plan for Anaphylaxis, ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis and ASCIA Action Plan for Allergic Reactions.

**Precautions**

• An adrenaline autoinjector should be administered into the outer mid-thigh, as shown in the diagrams on the barrel of the device, the package insert, the device specific ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis and the device specific ASCIA First Aid Plan for Anaphylaxis.

• An ambulance should be called immediately after giving an adrenaline autoinjector to take the person to hospital, so they can remain under medical observation until symptoms have resolved.

• A copy of the device specific ASCIA First Aid Plan for Anaphylaxis (ORANGE) should always be kept with an adrenaline autoinjector for general use, and in the first aid kit if that is where it is stored.

• There are no absolute contraindications (factors which make it unwise to give treatment) for use of an adrenaline autoinjector in an person who is experiencing anaphylaxis.

• Transient (temporary) side effects of adrenaline such as increased heart rate, trembling and paleness are to be expected.

• There are no published reports of death or serious injury resulting from use of adrenaline autoinjectors.

• No serious or permanent harm is likely to occur from mistakenly administering adrenaline, using an adrenaline autoinjector, to a person who is not experiencing anaphylaxis.

**Further Information**

Further information is available on the ASCIA website [www.allergy.org.au/anaphylaxis](http://www.allergy.org.au/anaphylaxis)

Patient information and support is available from the following national patient support groups for Australia and New Zealand:

• Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia [www.allergyfacts.org.au](http://www.allergyfacts.org.au)
• Allergy New Zealand [www.allergy.org.nz](http://www.allergy.org.nz)

© ASCIA 2020

ASCIA is the peak professional body of clinical immunology/allergy specialists in Australia and New Zealand.

ASCIA resources are based on published literature and expert review, however, they are not intended to replace medical advice. The content of ASCIA resources is not influenced by any commercial organisations.

For more information go to [www.allergy.org.au](http://www.allergy.org.au)

To donate to immunology/allergy research go to [www.allergyimmunology.org.au](http://www.allergyimmunology.org.au)