



# Anaphylaxis Campaign

Supporting people at risk of severe allergies

## Managing Allergens in the Workplace:

A Guide for Employers and Employees

[www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)

# Who are we?



Supporting people at risk of severe allergies

The Anaphylaxis Campaign is the only UK wide charity solely focused on supporting people at risk of severe allergic reactions. We empower people living with severe allergies to be more confident in control of their lives.

Our ultimate aim is to create a safe environment for all people with allergies by working with and educating the food industry, schools, pre-schools, colleges, health professionals and other key audiences. Our focus is on medical facts, food labelling, risk reduction and allergen management.



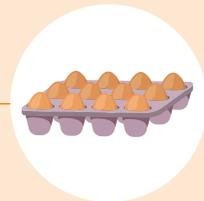
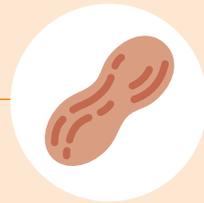
# What is Anaphylaxis and what are the common allergens?

Anaphylaxis (pronounced ana-fill-ax-is) is a severe and life-threatening allergic reaction that can be fatal.

Severe symptoms such as a swollen tongue, difficulty breathing or becoming unconscious usually develop suddenly, often within minutes after being exposed to an allergy trigger such as a particular food, latex, insect stings or certain drugs. There's no cure for anaphylaxis, people at risk must manage their condition and carry adrenaline, a life-saving emergency medication.

## Common UK Allergens include:

- Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Sesame, Shellfish, Milk and Eggs
- Grass and Tree pollen
- Insect stings
- Latex
- Dust mites, Moulds and Animal dander
- Medication - including ibuprofen, aspirin, and certain antibiotics.



# Allergen Management in the Workplace:

In the UK 1-2% of the adult population have allergies and intolerances. It is therefore important for employers and employees to work together to create an allergy safe working / studying environment. This might be in an office or healthcare environment, at a university, in a retail or outdoor working environment. Managing allergies in the workplace is important not only for employees but also volunteers, students and contractors.



## Guidance for Employers and Employees

# Ideas for Employers

Undertaking a workplace risk assessment and developing an allergy management guide can help you support your employees with allergies, find out more here: [www.hse.gov.uk/risk/](http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/)

Creating a working environment where employees can safely undertake their jobs is part of an employer's Duty of Care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

Be aware of your employees with allergies

Hang coats and jackets away from the main working area, as these can harbour dust and pet hair

Ensure the workplace is properly ventilated – all workplaces need an adequate supply of fresh air. However, if you have an individual with hay fever in the office, keep the windows closed in the early morning and late afternoon, as this is when the pollen count is highest

Create a safe area for the employees' food to be stored, provide safe snacks if food is provided for other employees and inform any outside caterers of employees with food allergies

Raise awareness with all employees by offering a training session to increase employees knowledge and understanding about allergies and anaphylaxis, find out more here: [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/information-training/allergywise-training](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/information-training/allergywise-training)

Ensure that employees are aware of the impact and consequences of "pranks" to other employees who have allergies

Ensure some employees are first aid trained, and understand the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction

If there are plants in the workplace, ensure they are regularly watered and the top soil removed to ensure mould isn't harboured

## Guidance for Employers and Employees

# Ideas for Employees



Give colleagues specific information about your allergies, including the seriousness of the allergy and how to recognise the signs of an allergic reaction

Consent to your employer sharing your allergy information with the wider workforce

Tell colleagues where you keep your medication and your Adrenaline Auto Injector(s) (AAI) – a device used to administer your adrenaline and what to do in the event of an emergency

Inform colleagues how they can help prevent allergic reactions, and how they can help you manage your allergies, such as consulting you before they plan a lunch or an event where food will be involved

Ask colleagues to label all food that they bring into the workplace and to not eat allergens in your workspace

Ensure that your workspace is regularly cleared and cleaned, so that it is not harbouring any dust or allergens that you may react to

# Allergy Action Plan

Develop an Allergy Alert Plan and share this with colleagues

.....  
is allergic to the following .....  
.....

**Emergency Contact details**  
Next of kin.....  
Contact number.....

**Please note:** The Human Medicines Regulations 2012 states that any lay person can administer adrenaline for the purpose of saving a life

- Mild to Moderate Symptoms**
- Swollen lips, face or eyes
  - Itchy / tingling mouth
  - Hives or itchy skin rash
  - Abdominal pain or vomiting
  - Sudden change in behaviour

- ACTION:**
- Stay with the colleague
  - Call for help if necessary
  - Locate adrenaline autoinjector(s)
  - Give antihistamine
  - Phone the colleagues emergency contact

**Watch for signs of ANAPHYLAXIS (life-threatening allergic reaction)**  
Anaphylaxis may occur without skin symptoms  
Always consider Anaphylaxis in someone who has food allergies and stops breathing

- Think A B C**
- AIRWAY:** Persistent cough, hoarse voice difficulty swallowing, swollen tongue
- BREATHING:** Difficult or noisy breathing, wheeze or persistent cough
- CONSCIOUSNESS:** Persistent dizziness / pale or floppy, suddenly sleepy, collapse, unconscious

- If ANY ONE (or more) of these signs are present:**
- Administer Adrenaline Autoinjector without delay.
- Lie the adult flat: (if breathing is difficult, allow the adult to sit) Dial 999 for ambulance and say ANAPHYLAXIS (“ANA-FIL-AX-IS”)
- IF IN DOUBT, administer the Adrenaline Autoinjector**
- After giving Adrenaline:**
1. Stay with adult until ambulance arrives, do NOT sit them up
  2. Commence CPR if there are no signs of life
  3. Phone emergency contact
  4. If no improvement after 5 minutes, give a 2nd adrenaline dose using a second Adrenaline Autoinjector device, if available

- Adrenaline Auto Injector**
- There are three different brands of Adrenaline Auto Injectors in the UK
- Jext
  - EpiPen
  - Emerade
- How to administer each device varies by brand, please follow the instructions on the device

# Frequently asked questions

## Q What is an Allergy?

An allergy is an abnormally exaggerated reaction of the body's immune system to an otherwise harmless substance in the environment

## Q What's the difference between allergy and intolerance?

An allergy causes an immune system reaction that affects many organs in the body. It can cause a range of symptoms. In some cases, an allergic reaction can be severe or life-threatening. In contrast, intolerance symptoms are generally less serious. If you have a food intolerance, you may be able to eat small amounts of the offending food without serious side effects. Food intolerances do not involve the immune system. The symptoms are often much slower to occur, involve larger doses and often happen because the body is unable to process the food effectively.

## Q What are the most common food allergies?

Peanuts, Tree Nuts, Sesame, Shellfish, Milk and Eggs

## Q What is an allergy season?

The allergy season depends on what you are allergic to and where you live.

## Q What are the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis?

The BSACI highlights the following symptoms that should help you recognise a potentially life-threatening reaction (BSACI, 2013).

**Airway:** persistent cough, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing, swollen tongue

**Breathing:** difficult or noisy breathing, wheeze or persistent cough

**Consciousness:** persistent dizziness / pale or floppy, suddenly sleepy, collapse, unconscious

Steady deterioration is also a warning sign that may mean an injection of adrenaline is vital.

Variations in symptoms can occur, in addition to the symptoms above there may also be:

- Widespread flushing of the skin
- Nettle rash (otherwise known as hives or urticaria)
- Swelling of the skin (known as angioedema) anywhere on the body.
- Swelling of the lips
- Abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting

## Q What is Cross Contamination?

Cross contamination is when an allergen is unintentionally transferred from one object to another.

**Q When should I tell a new employer about my allergy?**

Unless your allergy may directly impact the role, this does not need to be brought up at interview. We would recommend letting your employer know on acceptance of the role, to give them an opportunity to make reasonable adjustments to the working environment.

ACAS states; 'Where the employee is allergic to a product used in the workplace the employer should consider remedial action or a transfer to alternative work'.

**Q How should I tell my colleagues about my allergy?**

Whilst it is at the discretion of the allergic individual whether their colleagues are told about their allergy, we would recommend that those who work closely with you are aware. We would recommend having a conversation in which you discuss your allergy, the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and what to do if you have an allergic reaction.

**Q Are food allergies a choice?**

No, they are not a preference or lifestyle choice. When an individual is allergic to a food, ingestion or contact (even accidental contact) with that food it may cause an allergic reaction, whereby the body attacks itself. Reactions vary, but the most severe are life threatening.

**Q Is hand sanitiser as effective as washing hands?**

No, washing your hands is proven to remove more allergens than using antibacterial hand sanitisers.

**Q How can the risk from allergens be reduced in the workplace?**

**Dust Mites:** Ensure there is frequent carpet cleaning and dusting of work areas with a microfiber cloth

**Animal allergens:** Pet hair is often carried on clothing, if possible, hang coats away from the work station

Cleaning fluids and air fresheners release volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the atmosphere. Avoid using plug-ins and aerosol air fresheners and switch to cleaning products with no VOCs.

**Q Should we implement a 'nut ban' in the workplace?**

The Anaphylaxis Campaign doesn't typically recommend implementing a 'nut ban' as they are incredibly difficult to enforce, and research suggests they don't result in fewer allergic reactions. The Anaphylaxis Campaign promotes creating an allergy aware workplace.

**Q Should we ban employees eating at desks?**

The Anaphylaxis Campaign does not typically support 'bans' as a risk prevention strategy. In many workplaces, it is common for employees to eat at their desk and a ban would be very difficult to enforce, however for those who sit next to colleagues with allergies an understanding of cross contamination is important. It may also not be appropriate for an employee with allergies to 'hot desk' and this should be discussed with them.

# – Orange Wig Day

- Does your workplace want to show solidarity and support for people at risk of severe allergic reactions?
- Do you want to raise awareness and funds for the Anaphylaxis Campaign?
- Why not join our Orange Wig Day?
- **<http://www.orangewigday.co.uk>**



# AllergyWise

AllergyWise is the easiest way to learn about anaphylaxis, the risks of severe allergies and how to manage them, conveniently from your home or workplace, wherever and whenever it suits you.

Our free and accredited online AllergyWise e-learning courses are the perfect way to learn how to manage living with allergies in day-to-day life, recognise the signs and symptoms of a severe allergic reaction and know what to do in an emergency.

Website: [www.allergywise.org.uk](http://www.allergywise.org.uk)

Email: [allergywise@anaphylaxis.org.uk](mailto:allergywise@anaphylaxis.org.uk)

## Contact Us:

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### General Enquiries

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Email:

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### Helpline and Information Team

Our national helpline is available from Monday-Friday between 9am-5pm.

Tel: +44 (0) 1252 542029

Email:

[info@anaphylaxis.org.uk](mailto:info@anaphylaxis.org.uk)

### Acknowledgements to:

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# What do to in an emergency



As soon as a severe reaction is suspected, an adrenaline injection must be administered.



The person should remain as still as possible. Ideally, they should be lying down and if they are feeling weak, dizzy or appear pale and sweating, their legs should be raised.



Call 999. Say the person is suffering from anaphylaxis (anna-fill-axis). Give clear and precise directions to the operator, including your postcode.



Make a note of the time adrenaline was given. If there is no improvement, a second dose can be given after 5 minutes.



If the person deteriorates after making the initial 999 call, make a second call to ensure an ambulance has been dispatched.



Send someone outside to direct the ambulance crew.



Try to ascertain what food or substance caused the reaction and ensure the ambulance crew knows this.



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Campaign

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