

# Advice from MHRA

Regulating Medicines & Medical Devices

## Adrenaline auto-injectors: advice on use

### Key messages

- Carry two adrenaline auto-injectors with you at all times.
- Inject yourself in the outer thigh at the first signs of a severe allergic reaction
- Every time you use an adrenaline auto-injector:
- Call 999, ask for an ambulance and state 'anaphylaxis', **even if you start to feel better**.
- Lie flat with your legs up to keep your blood flowing.
- If possible, seek help immediately after using your auto-injector and stay with someone while waiting for the ambulance.
- If you still feel unwell after the first injection, use your second injector 5 to 15 minutes after the first.
- An adrenaline autoinjector is for emergency, on the spot treatment of an anaphylactic reaction. Always go to hospital after using an adrenaline auto-injector.

### What is an adrenaline auto-injector and what is it for?

An adrenaline auto-injector is an injection device filled with adrenaline. You should use it to inject yourself if you have an anaphylactic reaction.

### What is an anaphylactic reaction?

An anaphylactic reaction is a life-threatening allergic reaction which can happen very quickly. It can be set off by various triggers. The most common triggers are certain foods, medicines, and wasp and bee stings.

An injection of adrenaline in the outer thigh is the best emergency, on-the-spot treatment for an anaphylactic reaction.

### When should I use my auto-injector?

At the first signs of a severe allergic reaction, use an adrenaline auto-injector then call an ambulance. Signs of a severe reaction include:

- swelling in the throat
- change in voice
- difficulty swallowing or breathing
- wheezing
- dizziness
- feeling faint
- sudden tiredness

## **How should I use my auto-injector?**

- Inject yourself in the outer thigh through your clothes at the first signs of a severe allergic reaction. Your doctor or nurse should show you how to do this.
- Every time you use an adrenaline auto-injector:
- Call 999, ask for an ambulance and state 'anaphylaxis', even if you start to feel better.
- Lie flat with your legs up to keep your blood flowing. If you are having difficulty breathing, sit up to make breathing easier.
- If possible, seek help immediately after using your auto-injector and stay with someone while waiting for the ambulance.
- If you still feel unwell after the first injection, use your second injector 5 to 15 minutes after the first.
- Carry two adrenaline auto-injectors with you at all times
- Check the expiry date on your adrenaline auto-injectors and ask your doctor or nurse to prescribe you new ones before they expire. Out-of-date injectors may not work.

If you are in doubt about whether your reaction is severe or not, use your adrenaline auto-injector.

## **A note on brands**

Make sure that you have been trained to use the brand of auto-injector that you have been prescribed because injection technique varies between brands. Order and practice using a trainer device (available for free from the manufacturers' websites). The brand names of adrenaline auto-injectors currently available in the UK are Emerade, EpiPen, and Jext. See manufacturers' websites for further details.