

When Should Epinephrine Be Given?

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At a recent talk on anaphylaxis, Dr. Luciuk (Allergist – Richmond BC) stated that the only medication we have to stop an allergic (anaphylactic) reaction is epinephrine. He also made an interesting rhyme – ‘**antihistamines clear up hives, epinephrine saves lives**’. When you are wondering whether or not to administer that dose of epinephrine, these thoughts may help you make the decision.

The injection itself is unlikely to cause any significant or long-lasting side effects, so it is best to take a “better safe than sorry” approach. It is easier to stop a reaction in the early stages; don’t wait to “see what happens”. School administrators should ensure that the parents are notified, that the child is transported to hospital and that a second dose is given if symptoms continue or worsen.

Remember the epinephrine is the only medication currently recommended for the emergency treatment of a severe, or potentially severe, allergic reaction. It should be stored at room temperature away from light. Check expiry dates and replace as needed.

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