Severe Allergic Reactions

A severe allergic reaction is quick and can be life-threatening. It can result from something as simple as eating peanut butter, as unexpected as a bee sting, as inadvertent as touching metals or latex or breathing pollen in the air.

How to spot a severe allergic reaction

- Difficulty breathing, wheezing, tightness in throat or chest
- Swelling of the face and neck and puffy eyes
- Anxiety, agitation, nausea or vomiting

Steps to take

- Call 9-1-1
- Determine if there’s an emergency epinephrine auto-injector present
- If the victim cannot use the auto-injector
  - Help a responsive victim use his or her emergency epinephrine auto-injector
  - If the victim cannot use his or her prescribed auto-injector, you may administer it yourself if permitted by state law.
- If symptoms continue after the first dose and EMS are not expected to arrive within 5-10 minutes, a second dose of epinephrine should be administered using a second auto-injector and following the guidelines above
- Monitor the victim’s breathing
- If needed, administer CPR*
- If responsive
  - help victim sit up in a position easiest for breathing
- If unresponsive and breathing, put victim in the Recovery Position:
  - extend one arm above the victim’s head
  - gently roll the victim on their other side
  - support their head on their extended arm
  - stabilize their position by bending both legs
  - open the mouth to allow drainage and monitor breathing

For more information on this and other safety topics, visit the member-exclusive website at nsc.org

*Only those with CPR training should administer CPR.

Source: 5 Minute Safety Talk® Severe Allergic Reaction, National Safety Council