



# A pharmacist's guide to counselling patients on the EpiPen® (epinephrine) Auto-Injector.



## **Indications and Clinical use:**

- EpiPen® and EpiPen Jr® Auto-Injectors are indicated for the emergency treatment of anaphylactic reactions in patients who are determined to be at increased risk for anaphylaxis, including individuals with a history of anaphylactic reactions.
- Select dose according to patient's body weight.
- Inject into the outer thigh.
- Following treatment of anaphylaxis, the patient must call 911.



Trusted for over 25 years.

## When encouraging patients to renew their expired EpiPen® Auto-Injector, or when counselling patients who are renewing their auto-injector:

- ✓ **Ask patients if they have had any reactions over the past year.**
  - Find out about the severity of their allergic reactions, and whether the EpiPen® Auto-Injector was used.
  - Remind patients about the importance of following-up with their doctor or Allergist.
  
- ✓ **Emphasize the unpredictability of anaphylaxis and the importance of carrying a valid EpiPen® Auto-Injector at all times.**
  - Inform patients that **3 out of 4** people who experienced anaphylaxis then had another anaphylactic reaction.\*<sup>3</sup>
  - Tell patients that a second reaction can occur up to 48 hours after an initial reaction without additional exposure to the allergy trigger.<sup>1</sup>
  - Explain that the severity of previous reactions cannot predict the severity of future reactions, and that future reactions could therefore be the same, better or worse.<sup>1</sup>
  - Inform patients that the risk of a life-threatening allergic reaction is highest in teens and young adults.<sup>4,5</sup>
  
- ✓ **Assess patients' confidence level regarding the use of the EpiPen® Auto-Injector, and use the attached patient tearsheet to review usage instructions.**
  - Review the 2-step instruction diagram, and demonstrate proper administration technique using the EpiPen® Auto-Injector Training Device.
  - Ask patients to practice with the Training Device to help increase their comfort level.



***The attached tearsheet can help your patients be prepared in the event of a severe allergic reaction. Review the information when counselling new and existing patients, and remember to distribute the tearsheet to all EpiPen® Auto-Injector patients.***

NOTE: The EpiPen® Auto-Injector Training Device does not contain a needle, or epinephrine.

\* Retrospective chart review and follow-up questionnaire of 266 patients presenting to a university-affiliated private practice allergy and immunology clinic from January 1978 through March 1992.

## When counselling new patients, use the attached patient tearsheet to:

- ✓ **Define anaphylaxis and review the symptoms patients may experience.**
  - Explain anaphylaxis from a physiological perspective to help patients better understand the range of symptoms that may occur.
  - Tell patients that having asthma can put them at a higher risk of anaphylaxis.<sup>1</sup>
- ✓ **Discuss avoidance strategies for food allergies.**
  - Remind patients to check all product labels, and to be aware that some ingredients may have alternate names. Tell patients they can contact food manufacturers if they are unsure about a particular food.<sup>2</sup>
  - Explain the concept of cross-contamination, and remind patients that contaminated equipment may be used in restaurant food preparation.
- ✓ **Review the simple 2-step EpiPen® Auto-Injector administration process.**
  - Explain the role of epinephrine in the treatment of anaphylaxis.
  - Use the EpiPen® Auto-Injector Training Device to **demonstrate** proper administration technique. Have patients practice with the Training Device to help increase their confidence, and provide them with their own Training Device along with the attached tearsheet.
- ✓ **Stress the importance of carrying a valid EpiPen® Auto-Injector at all times.**
  - Recommend that patients have multiple auto-injectors, to be kept in all key locations – e.g., bag/carrier, home, work, school/daycare, etc.
  - Review proper storage instructions.
  - Remind patients to check the expiry date on their EpiPen® Auto-Injector, and replace it before that date.<sup>1</sup>

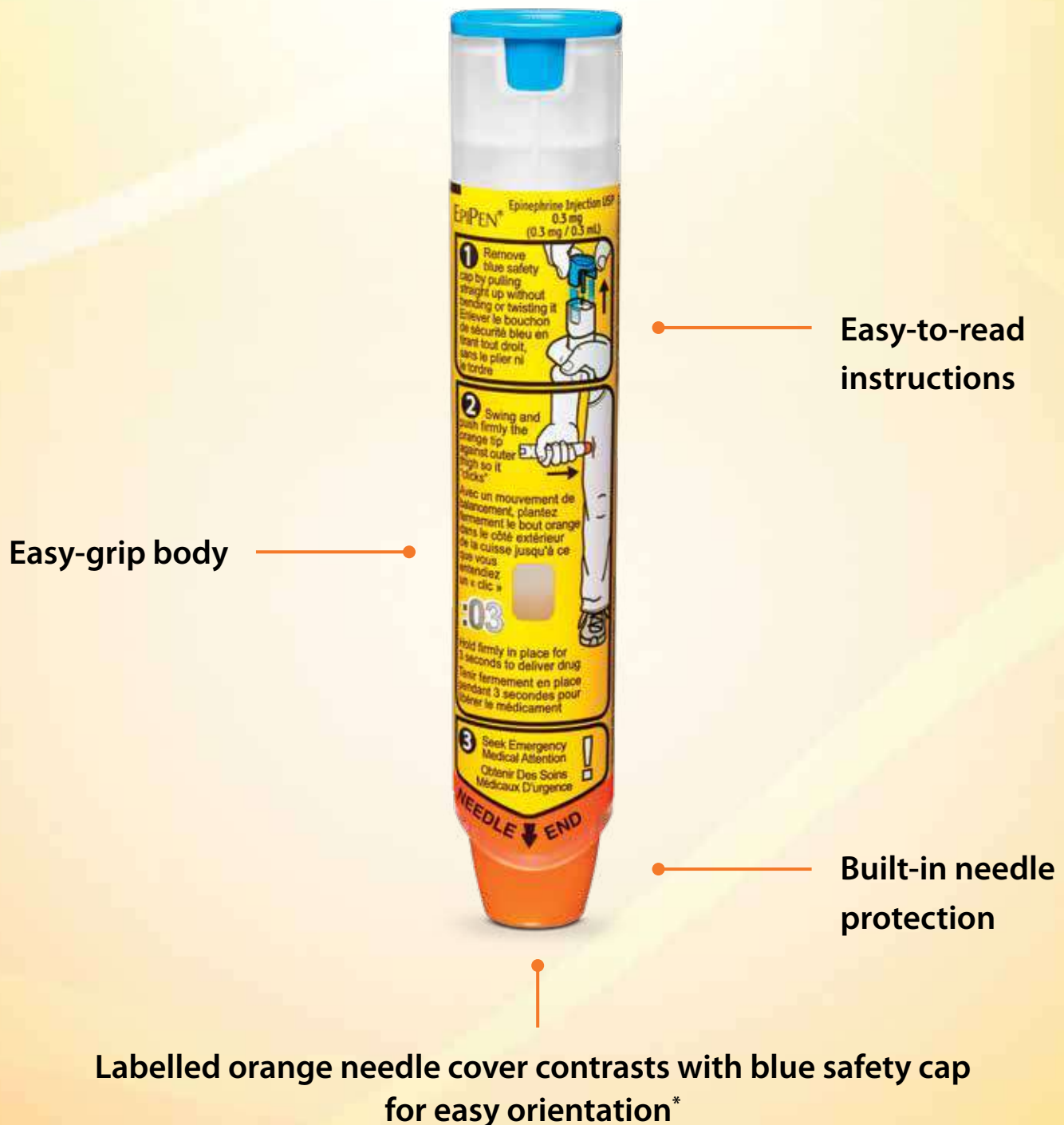
***Establish a yearly follow-up program to ensure patients always have a valid EpiPen® Auto-Injector on hand. In addition, advise them to register for the FREE EpiPen® Expiration Reminder Service at the consumer site [EpiPen.ca](http://EpiPen.ca)***





# Designed to be distinguishable.

The size, shape, and features of the EpiPen® Auto-Injector were designed to be user-friendly.



*Provide patients with their own Training Device to help increase their confidence in using the EpiPen® Auto-Injector.*

Ask your Pfizer representative for more Training Devices.

NOTE: The EpiPen® Auto-Injector Training Device does not contain a needle, or epinephrine.

\* The blue safety cap and orange needle cover are designed to be easily distinguished by people who are colour blind.

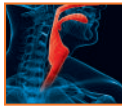
# Your guide to severe allergic reactions and EpiPen®

## What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that occurs when a person is exposed to an allergy trigger, or *allergen*. When the allergen enters the body, chemicals are released that can lead to life-threatening symptoms. These may include:



**MOUTH:** itching, swelling of the lips and/or tongue



**THROAT\*:** itching, tightness, closure, hoarseness



**SKIN:** itching, hives, redness, swelling



**GUT:** vomiting, diarrhea, cramps



**LUNG\*:** shortness of breath, cough, wheeze



**HEART\*:** weak pulse, dizziness, passing out (due to low blood pressure)

*Past reactions cannot predict the severity of future reactions.*

*Therefore, future reactions can be the same, better or worse than previous reactions.*

## How can I be prepared?

There are steps you can take to reduce the risk of a severe allergic reaction. These include:

- Understand your allergy triggers and avoid them whenever possible
- If you have a food allergy:
  - Always check product labels, and be aware that some ingredients may have alternate names
  - Remember that some food products may contain hidden ingredients
  - Be aware that food in restaurants may have been prepared using utensils or equipment that have come into contact with your allergy trigger
- If you have a latex allergy, read product labels carefully

*You can't always avoid your allergy triggers, but you can be prepared.*

*Carry a valid EpiPen® Auto-Injector at all times, and see the back of this sheet for helpful instructions on using your auto-injector.*

## How does the EpiPen® Auto-Injector work?

The EpiPen® Auto-Injector contains epinephrine, a medication that can help decrease your body's allergic reaction by: relaxing the muscles in your airways so you can breathe more easily, helping to reverse the rapid and dangerous decrease in blood pressure, and relaxing the muscles in your stomach, intestines and bladder.

## When and how do I use the EpiPen® Auto-Injector?

Remember to **carry your EpiPen® Auto-Injector at all times** and administer it immediately at the first signs of anaphylaxis.

### Blue to the sky. Orange to the thigh.

To use your EpiPen® Auto-Injector, follow these 2 simple steps:



- Grasp with orange tip pointing downward
- Remove blue safety cap by pulling straight up – do not bend or twist



- Place the orange tip against the middle of the outer thigh
- Swing and push the auto-injector firmly into the thigh until it “clicks”
- Hold in place for 3 full seconds

#### Built-in needle protection

- After injection, the orange cover automatically extends to ensure the needle is never exposed.

**After using your EpiPen® Auto-Injector, seek immediate medical attention or go to the emergency room. For the next 48 hours, you must stay close to a healthcare facility or be able to call 911.**

## Where and how should I store my EpiPen® Auto-Injector?

Keep an EpiPen® Auto-Injector in each of the places you visit on a regular basis – for example, at home, at work, at school/daycare, and in your bag or EpiPen® carrier.

Always store your EpiPen® Auto-Injector in the carrier tube with the blue safety release on until you need to use it. Keep your EpiPen® Auto-Injector at room temperature, and replace it if the colour or consistency of the clear liquid changes.

**It's important to replace your auto-injector before it expires. To help keep track of the expiry date, register for the FREE EpiPen® Expiration Reminder Service at the consumer site [EpiPen.ca](http://EpiPen.ca).**

EpiPen® and EpiPen Jr® (epinephrine) Auto-Injectors are indicated for the emergency treatment of anaphylactic reactions in patients who are determined to be at increased risk for anaphylaxis, including individuals with a history of anaphylactic reactions. Selection of the appropriate dosage strength is determined according to patient body weight.

EpiPen® and EpiPen Jr® Auto-Injectors are designed as emergency supportive therapy only. They are not a replacement for subsequent medical or hospital care. After administration, patients should seek medical attention immediately or go to the emergency room. For the next 48 hours, patients must stay within close proximity to a healthcare facility or where they can call 911. To ensure this product is right for you, always read and follow the label. Please consult the Consumer Information leaflet in your product package for warnings and precautions, side effects, and complete dosing and administration instructions.



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There are no absolute contraindications to the use of epinephrine in a life-threatening allergic situation.

**Relevant warnings and precautions:**

- Avoid use of epinephrine in patients with cardiogenic, traumatic, or hemorrhagic shock; cardiac dilation; cerebral arteriosclerosis; organic brain damage, and narrow-angle glaucoma
- Use with caution in patients with cardiac arrhythmias; coronary artery or organic heart disease; hypertension and hyperthyroidism
- Sulfite sensitivity
- Diabetes
- Parkinson's disease
- Not intended as a substitute for immediate medical care, the patient should seek immediate medical or hospital care
- More than two sequential doses of epinephrine should only be administered under direct medical supervision
- The patient/carer should be informed about the possibility of biphasic anaphylaxis
- Epinephrine should only be injected into the anterolateral aspect of the thigh. Hold child's leg firmly during injection
- Suboptimal effect in patients with a thick subcutaneous fat layer
- Injection site infections

**For more information:**

Please consult the prescribing information at [www.pfizer.ca/pm/en/EPIPEN.pdf](http://www.pfizer.ca/pm/en/EPIPEN.pdf) for more information relating to adverse reactions, drug interactions, and dosing information, which has not been discussed in this piece. The prescribing information is also available by calling 1-800-463-6001.

**References:** 1. EpiPen® and EpiPen Jr® Prescribing Information. Mylan, L.P., May 30, 2017. 2. Health Canada. *Severe Allergic Reactions*. May 2003. [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/med/allerg-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/med/allerg-eng.php). 3. Kemp SF, Lockey RF, Wolf BL, Lieberman P. Anaphylaxis: a review of 266 cases. *Arch Intern Med* 1995;155:1749–1754. 4. Gupta R, Springston E, Warriar M, et al. The Prevalence, Severity, and Distribution of Childhood Food Allergy in the United States. *Pediatrics* 2011;128(1):e9-e17. 5. Shah E and Pongracic J. Food-induced anaphylaxis: Who, What, Why, and Where? *Pediatric Annals* 2008;37(8):536-541.



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