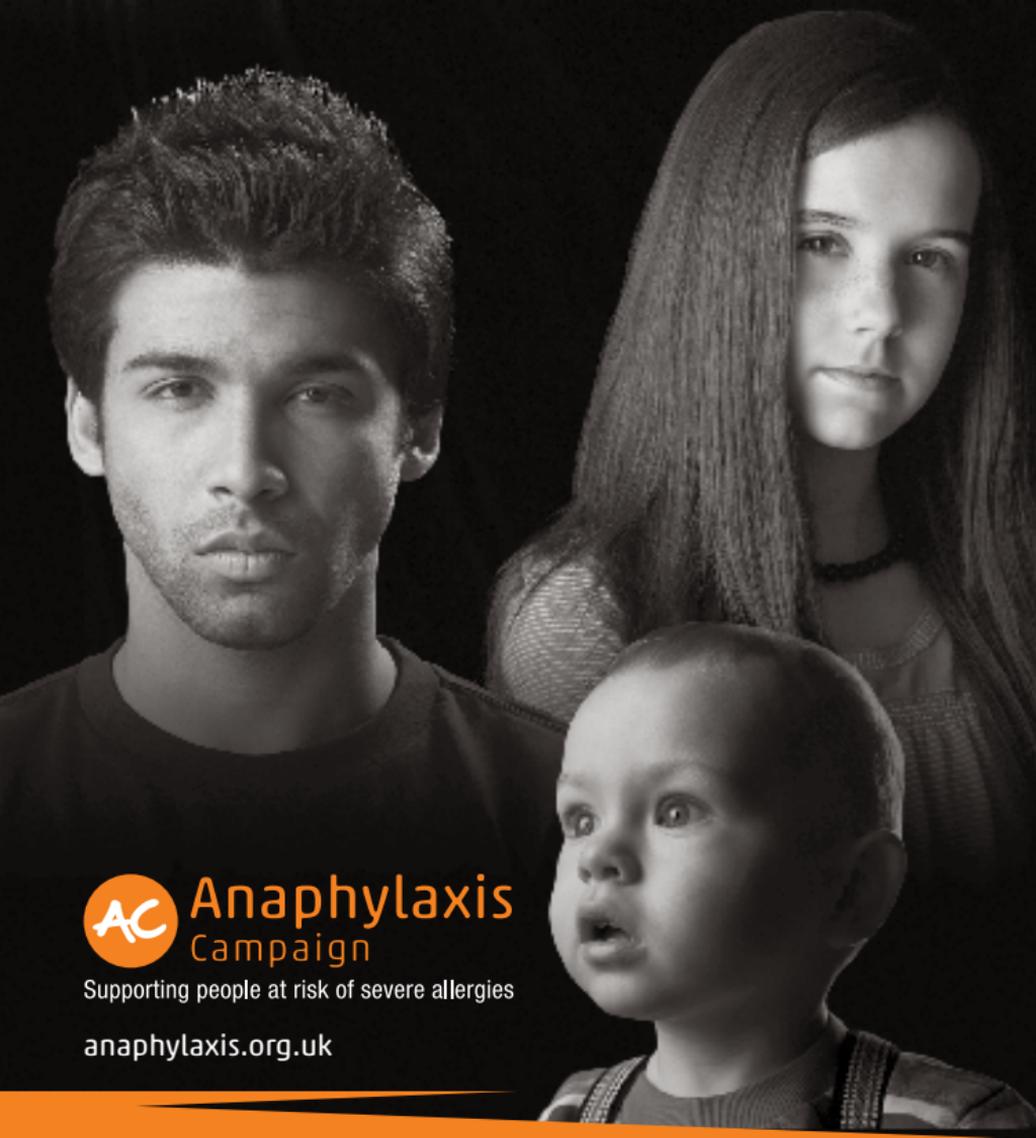




Anaphylaxis Information Matters

Life-threatening  
allergic reactions?  
Take AIM.



**Anaphylaxis**  
Campaign

Supporting people at risk of severe allergies

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

Real  
Life

Twelve year old Ella from London has allergies to a variety of nuts. Her Dad describes eating out with her as “often feeling like playing Russian Roulette”. Yet Ella loves cooking and eating out. She manages her allergies by diligently checking food labels, avoiding any cross-contamination of foods at home, making sure she asks chefs about the contents of her meal, not accepting unlabelled food from school friends and carrying her medication kit with her at all times.

“I am becoming much more confident now when I order food and whenever I go out with my friends I do three things: check, double-check and check again!

Confidence is everything, otherwise how am I to convince people that I have a life threatening food allergy that they may not take seriously?”

Ella

Footnote. We assume the person reading this booklet has the allergy so we have used “you” in all cases but we appreciate you may be the parent of a young child or baby and have been given this information to help your understanding and knowledge.

# Allergy and Anaphylaxis Don't be in the dark

You've been told by your doctor that you have an allergy. You may even have more than one allergy. Perhaps you also have asthma. Doing what you can to avoid a severe allergic reaction, known as anaphylaxis (anna-fill-ax-is), is vital. More information about anaphylaxis can be found later in this booklet.

Having asthma, as well as an allergy, increases your risk of anaphylaxis. That's why it's important to have good asthma control, attend regular reviews with your asthma nurse and know how to manage it.

Early diagnosis and a review by an allergy team will help to inform you about how to manage your allergy, how to be free to enjoy the activities you want to do and how to inform your friends and colleagues.

It is important to gain as much information as possible about your allergies and triggers from recognised patient websites.

Make sure that you have an emergency care plan in place if a severe allergic reaction happens.

Keeping safe is essential and, as the old saying goes, knowledge is power. Not just your own knowledge but the knowledge of those around you, like at school, work or when you're out with friends.

# Anaphylaxis Information Matters

"Anaphylaxis" (pronounced anna-fill-ax-is) is used to describe an extreme and severe allergic reaction. The whole body is affected, often within minutes of exposure to the substance which triggers the allergic reaction (called the allergy trigger or allergen), though sometimes it may be after a few hours.

## Some symptoms

Children may appear weak and 'floppy'. Swollen lips and/or eyes, itchy skin or a rash like hives, wheezing and finding it hard to breathe or speak, feeling faint, dizzy or confused, vomiting or having diarrhoea are just some of the symptoms of severe allergy and need immediate action. This is by no means a full list of symptoms, so always speak to your doctor about what you should watch out for.

Sometimes there are other factors that on the day can increase the severity of your reaction. These are called co-factors and these can include exercise, feeling unwell with a viral illness, alcohol and tablets, such as some painkillers.

For some people with allergies, more serious reactions such as anaphylaxis may only occur if they have eaten a specific food, or taken the medication to which they are allergic, and then they exercise. People with asthma and allergies are known to be more at risk of severe reactions than those without.

Image above taken from our film #takethekit  
To watch this video, go to [takethekitcampaign.co.uk](http://takethekitcampaign.co.uk)



It's important to realise that the way you respond to a trigger can change over time - what's described as a mild reaction to a particular trigger in your pre-teens could become a severe reaction later in life, especially if you combine this with poorly controlled asthma.

If you have suffered a severe allergic reaction in the past, whatever the cause, then it's important to be prepared for other severe reactions in the future. If a significant reaction to a tiny dose of the allergy trigger occurs, or a reaction has occurred on skin contact, this might also be a sign that a bigger dose may cause a severe reaction. A mild reaction today, could be a severe reaction next time. Avoid the risk.

## Food triggers

A food allergy is when the body's immune system reacts unusually to specific foods. Common triggers include foods such as peanuts (grown underground), tree nuts (e.g. almonds, walnuts, cashews and Brazil nuts), sesame, fish, shellfish, dairy products like milk and cheese and eggs.

It is wise for people who are allergic to peanuts or tree nuts to avoid Thai, Chinese and Indian restaurants. Be cautious of any dishes with sauces or dressings unless you're absolutely certain of what they contain. For example, curries may be thickened with peanut flour or ground almonds. There are new laws about food allergy labelling and the Food Standards Authority provides food alerts that you can sign up to.

## Non-food triggers

Non-food allergens include wasp or bee stings and medicines (e.g. antibiotics or some pain killers). There are others, like latex and these are very rare.

# 3 simple steps to taking control

## 1 Identify

Anyone who believes they suffer from an allergy should see their healthcare professional. Understand your allergy triggers and avoid them. Recognise the early symptoms of an allergic reaction. Ask your healthcare professional (usually your GP) to take a full allergy history, including an assessment of your asthma control.

Assessing risk of anaphylaxis matters so that you can take precautions, carry your rescue medicine and know how to explain to others about what you might need. This is important for your future safety.

## 2 Treat

At an Allergy Centre, you will have a detailed discussion about your symptoms and investigations may well be carried out. A treatment plan should be created. Where there is a chance of an allergy being severe, you will be prescribed the appropriate medication.

## 3 Protect

You matter! Be aware of your triggers and risks. Check, check and check again: the labels on food and drink every time (ingredients change), the expiry date on your medication (you can get a reminder on your phone for this), contents of your meal when eating out (inform the restaurant staff, including the chef and manager,

about your allergy) and always, always carry your medication with you. Don't ignore the "may contain" label – it is an alert to potential cross contamination risks during production. When going on holiday, alert the airline, translate and write down your key trigger words into the local language (including anaphylaxis), avoid risks. Don't forget, wherever you are, tell those around you so they can protect you too.

Be guided by the Allergy Centre and the Anaphylaxis Campaign charity which has plenty of information on its website:

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

### Real Life

Catherine from Birmingham had no problem eating nuts until out of the blue she suffered a severe allergy to peanut butter aged 23.

“Being diagnosed with severe peanut allergy later in life, and some 20 years ago, was an odd experience. I needed to learn quickly to cope with it. Back then, eating out was challenging. Restaurants and food suppliers didn't cater well for people with allergies. Fast forward to today, food is labelled more clearly and people are more acutely aware but I still check ingredients every time. Anti-histamine and adrenaline pens are always with me and I let my friends know where they are and how to use them, should the need arise.”

Severe allergy and anaphylaxis can strike at any age, any time, anywhere. So, **Anaphylaxis Information Matters.**

# Treatment

Many people manage their allergies with anti-histamines. Often these are recommended for hay fever or mild skin or food allergies. However, it is important to note that they may not be adequate to treat a more severe reaction. Your doctor will check your allergy history to assess this potential risk.

Adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs) are prescribed to those believed to be at higher risk. Adrenaline (also known as epinephrine) acts quickly to constrict blood vessels, relax and smooth muscles in the lungs to improve breathing, stimulate the heartbeat and help to stop swelling around the face and lips. You should be trained in how to use them. They need to be used quickly in the event of a reaction.

Check out the websites of the manufacturers for guidance on how to use your specific adrenaline pen:

[www.emerade-bausch.co.uk](http://www.emerade-bausch.co.uk)  
[www.epipen.co.uk](http://www.epipen.co.uk)  
[www.jext.co.uk](http://www.jext.co.uk)

Real  
Life

“When I discovered my son has cow's milk protein allergy I was beside myself. I'd never even heard of it and I didn't know where to start in regards to dairy free foods. My brother became anaphylactic to almonds at age 30, so I know just how serious food allergies can be. My biggest fear is that my son will become anaphylactic. I find the online communities have been my biggest support and have made me feel less alone on this allergy journey. Sharing what I have learnt with others online also helps me to deal with the emotional side of it.”

Lyndsay

# AllergyWise

AllergyWise is an online training programme available exclusively to members of the Anaphylaxis Campaign. It provides lots of information, including what to do in an emergency. Take time to visit:

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

## Excuses, excuses ...



These are just some of the excuses young people use as reasons why they don't tell their friends about their allergies or why they don't carry their adrenaline pens. But what would you prefer? A little awkwardness once in a while or a potentially fatal attack? Watch our video to find out more:

[www.takethekitcampaign.co.uk](http://www.takethekitcampaign.co.uk)



## If you've been prescribed an adrenaline pen, when is the right time to use it?

The good news is that even if symptoms are mild, using an adrenaline pen shouldn't cause any harm but it may well stop the symptoms or, if the symptoms are severe, create time for you to get to hospital.

Make sure you know how to use it and keep fingers and thumbs away from the injector part. It's quite simple really - the advice from leading specialists is:

- **DON'T WAIT!**  
AIM and FIRE the adrenaline pen into the outer thigh at the first sign of a severe reaction. Make sure it's the right way up.
- Hold for 10 seconds.
- **As soon as possible, call 999** and say the word anaphylaxis (anna-fill-ax-is). You can call 999 from any phone, even if you have no minutes left on your mobile.
- If reaction continues or worsens after 5-15 minutes, AIM and FIRE again!
- Lie the person flat but if breathing is difficult, allow them to sit but keeping still.
- Go with the person in the ambulance to hospital - *even if* symptoms have reduced or stopped.

With access to the right high-quality information, you can learn to manage your allergy successfully and we'll try our best to make this as easy as possible for you.

Visit [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk) for lots more information and videos from people who have their own stories to share with you.

Helpline **01252 542029**

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



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**Aim.**



Supporting people at risk of severe allergies



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