



A brighter future for people with serious allergies

Preparing for & Managing Your Allergies at University

A Guide for University Students

www.anaphylaxis.org.uk

Who are we ?

Anaphylaxis UK is the only UK-wide charity operating solely for the growing numbers of people at risk of serious allergic reactions and anaphylaxis. We believe that by providing information, training and support, there is a brighter future for people living with serious allergies.

www.anaphylaxis.org.uk





What is Anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis (pronounced ana-fil-axis) is a serious and life-threatening allergic reaction. Serious symptoms such as a swollen tongue, difficulty breathing or becoming unconscious usually develop suddenly, often within minutes of being exposed to an allergy trigger such as a particular food, latex, insect stings or certain drugs. So people at risk must manage their condition and carry adrenaline, a life-saving emergency medication.

Anaphylaxis UK has identified 16-24 year-olds as a high-risk group when it comes to managing their allergies. Having previously had parents to support them in managing their allergies, they now face doing this alone. They are often reluctant to share information about their allergies, resist carrying their adrenaline auto-injectors (AAI's) and may experiment with foods they are allergic to.

Common UK allergens include:

Peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, shellfish, milk and eggs

Grass and tree pollen



Insect stings

Latex

Dust mites, moulds and animal dander

Medication – including ibuprofen, aspirin, and certain antibiotics

Going to University: Things to Consider

-  When attending university open days, discuss your allergies with staff and learn more about what procedures and policies they have in place to help you manage your allergies.
-  Review shared housing options. Most universities have both catered and self-catered accommodation. Self-catered accommodation may be a safer option as you can control what food you eat. However, choose what feels best for you.

Once your University place has been confirmed

Congratulations, you're going to university! See our top tips below on how to prepare for university with your allergies.

If you have chosen self-catered accommodation, learn to cook a few simple dishes for yourself that are free from your allergens.

Some universities may provide you with a mini fridge for your room to keep your food safe and free from cross contamination.

Purchase a medical alert bracelet or jewellery that has important medical information (such as your allergies) engraved on it.

Get into the habit of checking labels to ensure that the food you are consuming is free from your allergens. Have a few safe recipes ready that you have perfected! Please remember to check ingredients lists every time you buy new products, even if you know they are safe, as ingredients may change.

Remember to keep track of your doctors appointments and to pick up your AAI prescriptions.

Get into the habit of checking the expiry dates of your AAI. You can also sign up to the expiry alert service – check the manufacturer's website for more details.

Have an adult allergy action plan ready. See page 10 for the [Anaphylaxis UK adult allergy action plan](#).

Starting University

Starting university can be a daunting time for anyone, but especially for someone who has serious allergies. Below are a few ideas of what to consider when starting university.

Tell your housemates and friends about your allergies, what to do in the event of a serious allergic reaction, and how to use your adrenaline device. You can order trainer pens to show them more easily.

Download the app connected with your AAI and ask housemates and friends to do the same. This means that everyone has information on how to use the AAI and many other helpful tips at the touch of a button.

Speak to accommodation services, your personal tutor, catering staff (if in catered accommodation) and any other relevant university staff, about your allergies and requirements.

Put up a poster on what to do in an emergency in your shared accommodation kitchen.

[Visit Here](#)

Ensure that you carry your AAI with you at all times and let the people you are with know where to find them.

Label your allergen-free food and utensils to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

Sign up to the university medical centre and book an appointment to discuss your allergies.

Eating out







Before You Eat Out

-  Check the restaurant's menu beforehand, if possible.
-  Be aware of styles of food that traditionally contain your allergen.
-  Make sure those going to the restaurant with you know about your allergies.
-  Don't assume a certain meal will be okay.
-  Call ahead – ask the restaurant if they can cater for you.

The Law

In the UK, food businesses must provide information about any of the 14 major allergens when they are used as ingredients in the food and drink they provide. For foods sold without packaging, the information can be given verbally by a member of staff or written down, such as on a chalkboard.

When at the Restaurant, Remember to Ask the Questions

-  I have an allergy to X, can you cater for this?
-  Can I see the allergen information?
-  Can I, or can you, speak to the chef about how my meal is prepared?
-  How is cross contamination of my allergen prevented?
-  Can you make a note about my allergy on my order?
-  Can you confirm this meal is free from my allergen?

[Click here for more information on eating out with serious allergies.](#)

Top Tips for Managing your Allergies during University

Alcohol and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. ibuprofen) can increase the severity of an allergic reaction.

Recreational drugs and alcohol may affect judgement so early signs of a reaction may not be spotted and appropriate action not taken in time.

Latex and milk can be found in many brands of condoms, which will be an issue if you have a latex and/or milk allergy. There are many non-latex or milk-free condoms available, just ask the manufacturer's advice on which allergens may be used in production.

Kissing - allergens can remain in the saliva for several hours – anywhere between 2 and 24 hours and even brushing teeth before kissing may not get rid of them effectively. If you have an allergy, always check with the other person if they have eaten food you may be allergic to.

Ensure that you are storing your AAls correctly. Keep your AAls in their original containers to prevent light exposure, do not store above 25°C and do not freeze. EpiPens have an additional instruction to not refrigerate the device. Keep in mind that domestic fridges can sometimes freeze medications. Also, try not to put your bag containing your AAls near radiators."

If you're suffering from an illness, or have just recovered from one, this can put you at an increased risk of a serious allergic reaction.

Check regularly, through the viewing window on your AAls, that the solution is clear and colourless.

Stock up on cleaning supplies, allergy-proof pillows and mattress casings to protect yourself from dust mites if you have a dust mite allergy. Wash the pillow and mattress casings frequently.

Being fully responsible for your allergies, perhaps for the first time in your life, can be daunting. The unpredictability and severity of anaphylaxis can be a heavy burden. The constant vigilance required and the possibility of being in a life threatening situation means there is often intense anxiety associated with many daily activities. Our '[Psychological Impact of Anaphylaxis](#)' factsheet outlines the potential psychological effects of anaphylaxis and offers advice and coping strategies.

Many people with serious allergies have asthma. Smoking is likely to make asthma worse and poorly controlled asthma can make serious allergies much more dangerous.

Mould in student accommodation can be an issue for those suffering with a mould allergy. If you are and have mould in your room, talk to your landlord or accommodation services to get this removed. To prevent mould forming, avoid drying clothes indoors, be aware of indoor plants, and open windows regularly to keep your room dry and well-ventilated.

Set an alarm on your phone to remind you in the morning to take your AAI with you in your bag or on your person.

Sleepless nights and stress brought on by a looming deadline can significantly increase your vulnerability to a serious allergic reaction, so be mindful.

Placements abroad can be an exciting opportunity but can present more issues for your allergies. See our [travel pages](#) on our website for some helpful tips and advice.

Shared desks in the library can harbour allergens. Use wet wipes to clear away any crumbs and spills.

Name:

Date of birth:

Emergency contact:

Allergic to:

Mild to Moderate Symptoms

- nettle rash (known as hives or urticaria) anywhere on the body
- a tingling or itchy feeling in the mouth
- swelling of lips, face or eyes
- stomach pain or vomiting.



ACTION:

- stay where you are and call for help if necessary
- locate adrenaline auto-injectors
- take antihistamine
- watch for any of the ABC symptoms below.

Watch for signs of **ANAPHYLAXIS** (life-threatening allergic reaction). Anaphylaxis may occur without skin symptoms. Always consider anaphylaxis in someone who has a known allergy and has **SUDDEN BREATHING DIFFICULTY**.

Airways

swelling in the throat, tongue or upper airways (tightening of the throat, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing).

Breathing

- sudden onset wheezing
- breathing difficulty
- noisy breathing.

Circulation

- dizziness
- feeling faint
- sudden sleepiness
- tiredness
- confusion
- pale clammy skin
- loss of consciousness.

If ANY ONE (or more) of these signs are present:

1. **Lie flat with legs raised** (if breathing is difficult, can sit up).
2. **Administer an adrenaline auto-injector without delay** (e.g. EpiPen, Jext, Emerade).
3. **Dial 999** for an ambulance and say "**ANAPHYLAXIS (ANA-FIL-AXIS)**".

IF IN DOUBT, give adrenaline

After giving adrenaline:

1. Stay where you are until ambulance arrives, **do NOT stand up**.
2. Phone emergency contact.
3. **If no improvement after 5 minutes, a second adrenaline auto-injector should be used.**
4. Commence CPR if there are no signs of life.



There are three different brands of adrenaline auto-injectors in the UK



Jext



EpiPen



Emerade

How to administer each device varies by brand, please follow the instructions on the device

AllergyWise

Our online AllergyWise e-learning courses are the perfect way to learn:

- About serious allergies and anaphylaxis
- How to manage living with allergies in day-to-day life
- How to recognise the signs and symptoms of a serious allergic reaction
- What to do in an emergency

Website: www.allergywise.org.uk

Email: allergywise@anaphylaxis.org.uk

Contact Us:

Our Office

1 Alexandra Road,
Farnborough,
Hampshire,
GU14 6BU

General Enquiries

Tel: +44 (0)1252 546100

Email: admin@anaphylaxis.org.uk

Helpline & Information Team

Our national helpline is
available from Monday-
Friday between 9am-5pm.

Tel: +44 (0) 1252 542029

Email: info@anaphylaxis.org.uk

Supported by an educational grant from

ALK – Abelló.

Anaphylaxis UK
Company Limited by
guarantee incorporated
in England and Wales

Company Number: 04133242

Registered Charity Number:
1085527

Registered Office address:

1 Alexandra Road,
Farnborough GU14 6BU



What to do in an emergency



Stay where you are. You should lie flat with your legs raised to help blood flow back to your heart and vital organs. If you are struggling to breathe, you may need to be propped up, but this should be for as short a time as possible.



If the person deteriorates after making the initial 999 call, make a second call to ensure an ambulance has been dispatched.



Send someone outside to direct the ambulance crew.



As soon as a serious reaction is suspected, an adrenaline auto-injector must be administered.



Try to ascertain what food or substance caused the reaction and ensure the ambulance crew know this.



Call 999. Say the person is suffering from anaphylaxis (ANA-FIL-AXIS). Give clear and precise directions to the operator, including your postcode.



Make a note of the time adrenaline was given. If there is no improvement, a second dose can be given after 5 minutes.

 **anaphylaxis UK**

A brighter future for people with serious allergies