

Anaphylaxis

Lifesaving Society Standard Approved by the Ontario Board of Directors, January 2024

Standard

All aquatic staff should be trained in the proper care of anaphylaxis, including the administration of epinephrine (using the EpiPen® auto-injector), to ensure a reasonable standard of care for people in and around aquatic environments.

Definitions

Anaphylaxis: an allergic reaction triggered by foods, insect stings, medication, exercise and latex. Anaphylactic reactions occur when the body's immune system overreacts in response to the presence of a particular allergen. Reactions can affect multiple systems in the body: skin, upper and lower respiratory, gastrointestinal and cardiovascular systems. If untreated, anaphylaxis can cause death.

Epinephrine: the definitive emergency medication for severe allergic reactions. Epinephrine is *the* medication to use in the treatment of anaphylaxis, and is the drug of choice for medical specialists.

EpiPen®: an auto-injector to administer epinephrine.

Background/Rationale

Anaphylaxis is a serious, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. It is important that those aquatic staff who are trained be permitted to administer emergency treatment in the form of injections.

Approximately one to two percent of Canadians live with the risk of an anaphylactic reaction; more than 50 percent of Canadians know someone who is at risk.

Epinephrine auto-injectors are used for the emergency management of a person suffering from a potential life-threatening allergic reaction. Auto-injectors are commonly carried by individuals with a known allergy.

Epinephrine is a front-line medication that can save a life if administered in a timely manner (delaying administration can lead to death).

All lifeguards are trained in Standard First Aid (SFA) to identify the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis, and how to assist in the administration of epinephrine auto-injectors where appropriate.

In some jurisdictions, auto-injectors are available without a prescription and/or are available in first aid kits.

Implementation

The Lifesaving Society recommends operators include this position in their facility policy and procedures manual, and staff handbooks.

All staff should review this position and its application at least once a year during staff training sessions, or better, update and refresher sessions should be scheduled regularly throughout the year. A training record should be maintained listing aquatic staff who have participated in anaphylaxis training.

Operators should develop written policies and procedures by which patrons at risk of serious anaphylactic reactions can register personal information, including dosage, to ensure safe management of the medication.

Staff who are trained in the care of anaphylaxis should take a lead role in the administration of epinephrine where possible.

More information may be obtained from a variety of sources including your local Health Unit or Anaphylaxis Canada on their website:
www.anaphylaxis.org

References

- Anaphylaxis Canada (www.anaphylaxis.ca) – Anaphylaxis 101
- Lifesaving Society *Canadian First Aid Manual* p.45, p.73
- 2016 Canadian Consensus Guidelines for First Aid and CPR
- 2015 ILCOR/AHA First Aid Guidelines Part 15, Anaphylaxis
- Lifesaving Society Canada, National Standards Commission, Epinephrine Auto-injector Standard, 2017

Disclaimer

Lifesaving Society Safety Standards are developed using Coroners' recommendations, the latest evidence-based research, and reflect the aquatics industry's best practices at the time the publication was approved.

The purpose of these standards is to encourage swimming pool, waterpark and waterfront owners, managers, operators and regulators to adopt these standards, in order to prevent drownings in aquatic environments.

Lifesaving Society Safety Standards do not replace or supersede local, provincial/ territorial legislation or regulations, but they are considered the standard to which aquatic facility operators should work towards, in order to enhance safety within their operations and to prevent drowning.

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