

Anaphylaxis

Lifesaving Society Standard Approved by the Ontario Board of Directors, January 2001

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.

Aquatic staff should not administer epinephrine unless they are certain it is prescribed to the individual.

Anaphylaxis training should occur at least once a year.

Definitions

Anaphylaxis: Anaphylaxis is a severe, potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. It can occur within seconds or minutes of exposure to something you're allergic to, such as peanuts or bee stings. Anaphylaxis causes your immune system to release a flood of chemicals that can cause you to go into shock — your blood pressure drops suddenly, and your airways narrow, blocking breathing.

Epinephrine: also known as adrenaline, is a medication and hormone. As a medication, it is used to treat a number of conditions, including anaphylaxis, cardiac arrest, asthma, and superficial bleeding.

Autoinjector (or auto-injector): a medical device designed to deliver a dose of a particular drug.

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 per cent of Canadians live with the risk of an anaphylactic reaction; more than 50 per cent of Canadians know someone who is at risk.

Medical and aquatic communities support the position that if an individual presents signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis, epinephrine should be administered where medically prescribed to that individual.

The Lifesaving Society supports the position that staff who are trained in the use of specialty rescue equipment should be permitted to use that equipment in emergency situations.

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 Food Allergy Canada on their website: www.foodallergycanada.ca

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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