



A brighter future for people with serious allergies

Managing Allergens in the Workplace:

A Guide for Employers and Employees

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.

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What is anaphylaxis and what causes it?

Anaphylaxis (pronounced anna-fill-ax-is) is a serious, life-threatening allergic reaction. It's a whole-body response and requires emergency treatment without delay. It can occur when someone with allergies is exposed to something they are allergic to (known as an allergen). Reactions usually begin within minutes and rapidly progress, but can occur up to 2-3 hours later. Food allergens are the most common cause of serious allergic reactions, but some people will have serious reactions to other allergens, including pollen, animals (particularly cats, dogs, and horses), stinging insects, medicines, and even from unknown causes.

Managing Allergens in the Workplace



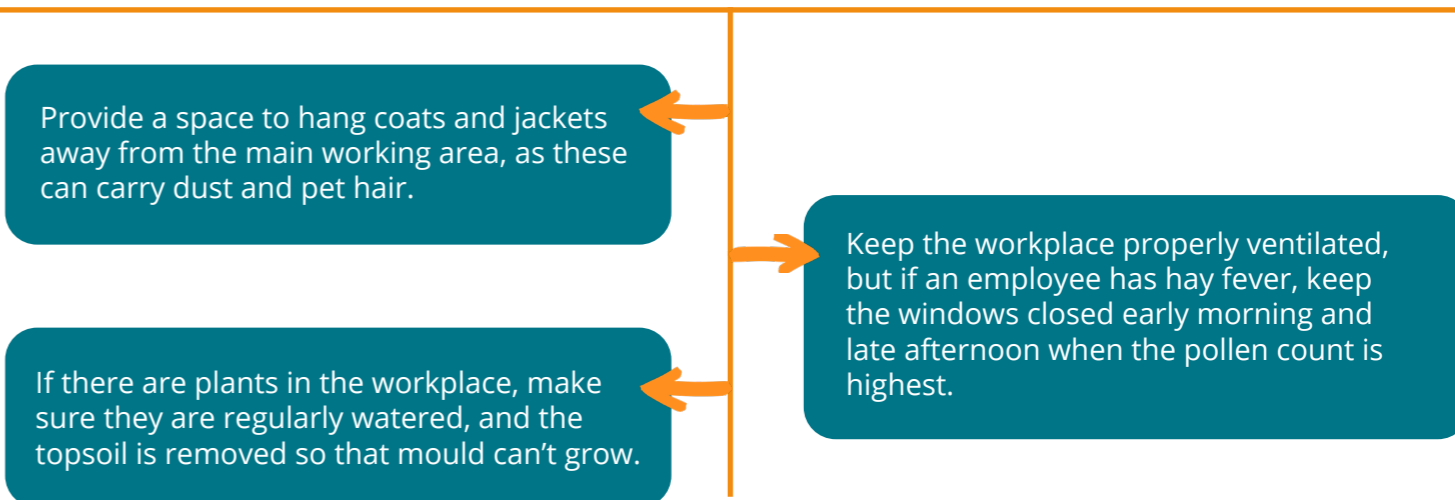
In the UK, 1-2% of the adult population have allergies and intolerances. Therefore, it's important for employers and employees to work together to create a safe working environment for people with allergies. Whether the workplace is an office, healthcare setting, university, retail, or outdoor working environment, managing allergens is important not only for employees but also volunteers, students, and contractors.

Ideas for Employers

If an employee has serious allergies, below are some ideas of how you can help keep them safe at work. This will depend on the person's allergy and their reaction history, so you should communicate directly with your employees with allergies to find out how you can best support them.

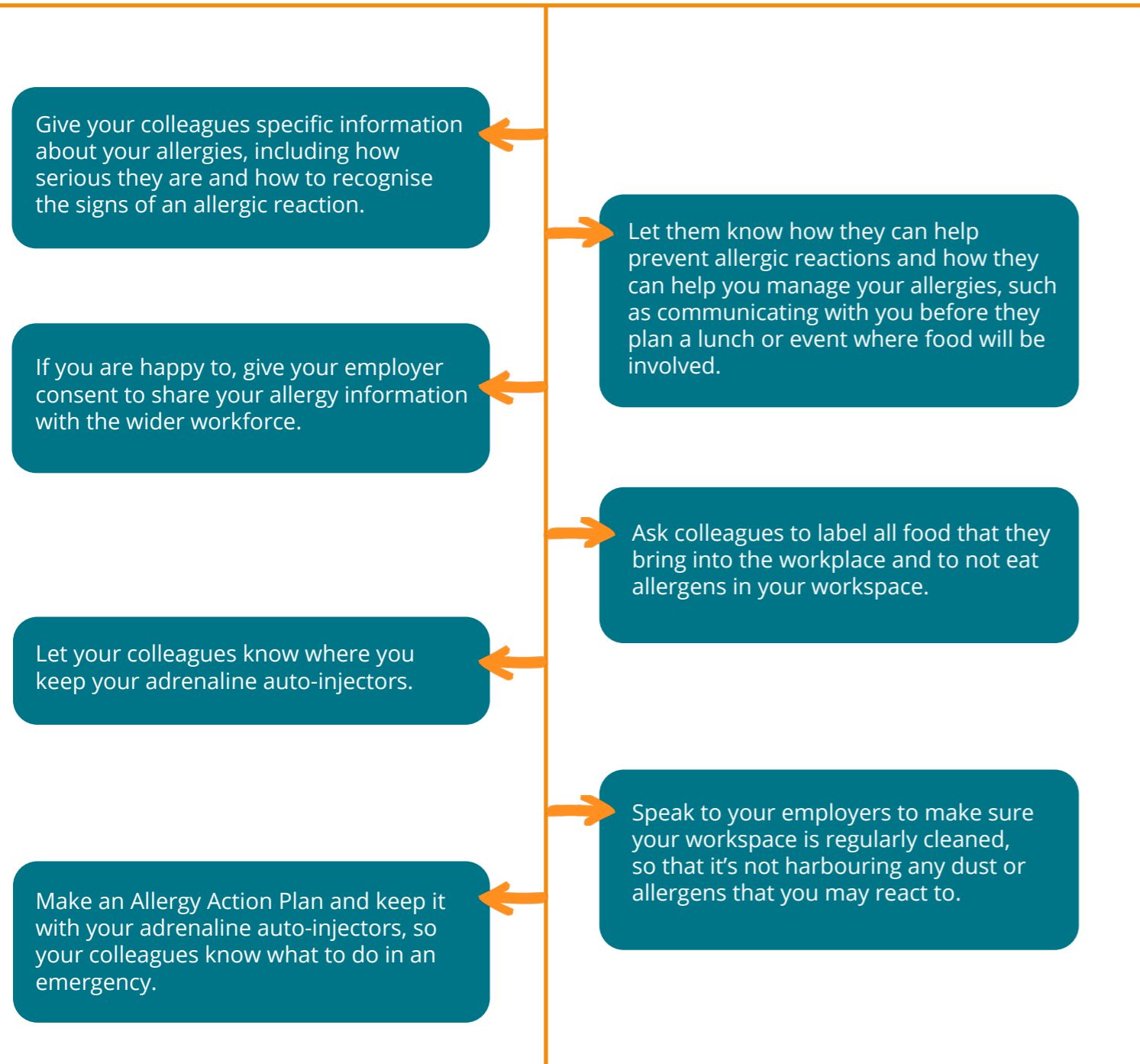


For employees with environmental allergies, such as house dust mite allergy, animal allergy, mould allergy or hay fever, below are some further points to consider:



Ideas for Employees

If you have an allergy, we recommend speaking with your employer about your allergies when you accept the position, so that they can carry out a workplace risk assessment and create a safer working environment for you.



Adult Allergy Action Plan

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	Breathing	Circulation
swelling in the throat, tongue or upper airways (tightening of the throat, hoarse voice, difficulty swallowing).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sudden onset wheezing • breathing difficulty • noisy breathing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 (ANNA-FILL-AX-IS)**".

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

Frequently asked questions

Q What are the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis?

Any one or more of the following symptoms may be present – these are often referred to as the ABC symptoms.

AIRWAY - 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.

Other symptoms that might be present include:

- Red raised rash (known as hives or urticaria) anywhere on the body.
- Tingling or itchy feeling in the mouth.
- Swelling of lips, face or eyes.
- Stomach pain or vomiting.

These symptoms can also happen on their own. If you don't have the ABC symptoms, the reaction is likely to be less serious and is not the same as anaphylaxis but watch carefully in case ABC symptoms develop.

Q I work with a colleague who has an animal allergy. Should assistance dogs be refused from entering the business?

Assistance dogs must be permitted access and it is the responsibility of the employer to put in place any measures that are necessary to keep the employee with the allergy safe. This could include measures such as the employee not being in the room/building at the time of the visit and implementing cleaning measures after the visit.

Q Should nuts be banned in the workplace?

We don't typically recommend complete bans of any food allergens because they can be very difficult to enforce, may lead to a false sense of security and cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment. People can be allergic to many food allergens other than nuts, for example fish and egg, and it would be impossible to ban them all. We recommend an allergy awareness and risk assessment approach. Workplaces should carry out an individual risk assessment for any employee with an allergy and put appropriate measures in place to reduce the risks as far as possible. Every workplace is different, but this may include extra cleaning measures or adjustments of the timings and locations of breaks and meals if necessary.

Q Is it ok for employees to eat at their desk?

Eating at desks is common practice in many workplaces and would be difficult to ban. If you sit near a colleague with a food allergy, it's important to have an understanding of cross-contamination risks and you shouldn't eat allergens in their workspace. It may also not be appropriate for an employee with food allergies to 'hot desk'.

Q Who is allowed to administer adrenaline in an emergency?

Regulation 238 of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 allows for adrenaline to be administered by anyone for the purpose of saving a life in an emergency.

Q When should I tell a new employer about my allergy?

Unless your allergy may directly impact the role, you don't need to bring it up at interview. We recommend letting your employer know on acceptance of the role to give them an opportunity to make reasonable adjustments to your working environment. [Find out more about reasonable adjustments from ACAS.](#)

Q Should I tell my colleagues about my allergy?

While it is always your choice whether to tell your colleagues about your allergy, we recommend that those who work closely with you are made aware. We recommend having a conversation in which you discuss your allergy, the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and what to do if you have an allergic reaction.

Q If I have to administer adrenaline, how quickly will it work?

Signs of improvement should be seen fairly rapidly – usually within minutes. If there's no improvement, or the symptoms are getting worse, then an injection with a second adrenaline auto-injector should be given after five minutes.

Q Is hand sanitiser as effective as washing hands?

No. Washing your hands is proven to remove more allergens than using antibacterial hand sanitisers.

AllergyWise for Workplaces

Our online AllergyWise® for Workplaces course is designed to ensure all staff in a workplace or business are allergy aware, can recognise the signs of a serious allergic reaction and have the confidence to safely manage a reaction.

The course includes:

- 5 modules & quizzes
- Links to useful resources
- Practical scenarios
- Final assessment
- Digital certificate of completion

Website: www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/allergywise/
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General Enquiries

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Helpline & Information Team

Our national helpline is available from Monday-Friday between 9am-5pm.
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What to do in an emergency



Stay where you are. **Lie down** with your legs raised if you can.



Use one of your **adrenaline auto-injectors (AAI)** without delay.



Call **999** or ask someone else to do this for you.



Ask for an ambulance and say this an emergency case of **anaphylaxis** (anna-fill-ax-is).



Note the **time you used your AAI** and use your **second AAI after five minutes** if you get worse or there's been no improvement.



While you are waiting for the ambulance, stay where you are and **do not stand up, or sit in a chair**, even if you are feeling better.



A brighter future for people with serious allergies



Fundraise for Anaphylaxis UK

Help colleagues better understand allergens by organising a fundraising event or challenge in your workplace to support Anaphylaxis UK!

There's something suitable for all colleagues and environments, and here are some of our fundraisers' favourites to inspire you:

- Organise a team race, trek or cycle
- Host a quiz night (we have an allergen quiz round prepared for you!)
- Hold an allergy-friendly bake sale
- Auction of office promises

Whatever you decide to do, we promise to support you every step of the way.

Your fundraising journey starts here!

Download our [Fundraising Pack](#), a handy guide and toolkit packed with the essentials you need to make your fundraising experience with Anaphylaxis UK enjoyable and a success.

We've also prepared some downloadable [fundraising resources](#) and promotional templates for you to explore.

Thank you for your support. Your fundraising efforts will help keep our vital services running so we can continue to strive for a brighter future for people with serious allergies.

Questions? Contact our [Fundraising Team](#) who are always happy to help.



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