

A potentially deadly reason to seek preventive health care

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Emergency rooms are more crowded than ever, with more than 136 million people making a trip annually. According to a study presented at the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI) 2012 Annual Scientific Meeting, some of these trips may be preventable under the regular care of an allergist. Such care may also save lives.

Researchers found 25 percent of individuals who went to the emergency room or were hospitalized for anaphylaxis, a life-threatening allergic reaction, had severe anaphylaxis, which required hospitalization or included heart or lung failure. This notable number of people were also less likely to have filled a prescription for life-saving epinephrine or to have visited with an [allergist](#) in the previous year.

"When you have an [anaphylactic reaction](#), epinephrine is important for managing life-threatening symptoms," said Sunday Clark, ScD, lead study author and assistant professor of [emergency medicine](#) and public health at Weill Cornell Medical College. "Allergic people at risk should always carry two doses of epinephrine and regularly see an allergist to prevent severe [allergic reactions](#) that require hospitalization."

A total of 11,972 people with an emergency department visit or hospitalization from 2002-2008 due to anaphylaxis were studied. Most with severe anaphylaxis were adults and most reactions in this more general sample were not triggered by food.

"Although symptoms may not always be severe, allergies are serious and, in some cases, deadly," said allergist Stanley Fineman, M.D., ACAAI president. "Allergies can be effectively controlled with proper diagnosis and treatment by a board-certified allergist that involves more than just relieving symptoms, but finding the source of the suffering."

While food is the most common trigger of anaphylaxis in children, medications, such as [penicillin](#), can also trigger anaphylaxis. It is also estimated that insect stings lead to about 500,000 allergy-related [emergency room](#) visits each year.

If you have had an anaphylaxis attack in the past, ACAAI suggests:

- Wear a medical bracelet that lists your trigger.
- Avoid allergens. The most effective way to prevent future trouble is to avoid contact with your trigger.
- Know what to do if you unexpectedly come into contact with your trigger. Your allergist can help you make a detailed plan for emergency care.
- If your allergist has prescribed emergency epinephrine, carry it with you at all times.
- Teach your family and friends how to help you if you begin to have anaphylaxis

Provided by American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology

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