



**MEDIA
RELEASE**



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National standard of care for anaphylaxis will save lives

The first national standard of care for patients with anaphylaxis has been released today. Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that requires medical treatment. The new standard emphasises the need for prompt treatment and continuity of patient care between acute and general practice healthcare settings.

The release is timely given a rising rate of visits to hospital emergency departments nationwide for this potentially fatal condition. Each year up to 20 Australians die from anaphylaxis. Australia has one of the highest documented rates of hospital anaphylaxis admissions in the developed world.ⁱ

The new *Acute Anaphylaxis Clinical Care Standard*, developed by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (the Commission), describes the optimal standard of clinical care for patients experiencing anaphylaxis, recommending priority areas for clinicians managing treatment.

Anaphylaxis occurs when our immune system overreacts to an allergen or allergy trigger. Common triggers are foods such as nuts, milk, fish, shellfish and eggs. Up to 10% of infants and 2% of adults have food allergies.ⁱⁱ Other common triggers are insect venoms such as wasp and bee stings, and some medicines.

Clinical lead for the new standard, Associate Professor Amanda Walker, Clinical Director at the Commission, reaffirmed the goal as safer care for all anaphylaxis patients.

“The standard addresses gaps in existing guidelines for patient care, such as ensuring timely treatment with adrenaline and strengthening the process for handover of care along the patient journey,” she said.

“Adrenaline is the first-line treatment for anaphylaxis and should be administered promptly.

“But a person who has experienced anaphylaxis remains vulnerable in the community after discharge. There needs to be a safe discharge and clear handover of care to the patient’s GP and immunologist.”

The new clinical care standard is also important for families and carers of people at risk, as well as for the individual themselves.

“It is vital for people at risk of anaphylaxis to know how to manage their allergy, how to recognise symptoms and how to correctly use a personal adrenaline injector if needed,” A/Professor Walker explained.

“What is new in the national standard is a requirement for patients at risk of anaphylaxis to have access to their prescribed adrenaline injector at all times. In hospital and healthcare settings, patients do not usually have access to their own medicines. This is one important exception, to ensure the adrenaline injector is with the patient wherever they are, so they can use it if needed.”

Dr Preeti Joshi, Co-chair of the National Allergy Strategy and paediatric clinical immunology/allergy specialist, said the standard would help avoid dangerous mistakes.

“The new standard highlights the importance of safe practices – such as ensuring a person with anaphylaxis does not stand up or walk, even after they have had adrenaline – a critical issue that is often overlooked when managing anaphylaxis.

“Having or witnessing anaphylaxis can be frightening, as symptoms can go from bad to worse very quickly. If it is not recognised and treated immediately, it can result in serious complications and can even be fatal,” said Dr Joshi.

Endorsements

The new clinical care standard is supported and endorsed by the National Allergy Strategy, a partnership between the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCI) and consumer group Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia (A&AA).

Endorsement has been provided by 15 medical and nursing colleges and other professional bodies, including the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine, the Australian College of Nursing, the Australia and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists, The Australasian College of Paramedicine, and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine.

Tune in for the launch of the new standard at 1:00pm AEDT today, Wednesday 24 November.

To register for the webcast and view the standard, visit: safetyandquality.gov.au/anaphylaxis-ccs

Expert speakers at the launch include A/Professor Amanda Walker; emergency physician at Fiona Stanley Hospital Perth, Dr Peter Leman; Chief Paramedic Officer at Safer Care Victoria, Alan Eade; paediatric clinical immunology/allergy specialist Dr Preeti Joshi; and GP Dr Joanne Simpson.

Highlights infographic: [Anaphylaxis in Australia](#) – key data highlights

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About the Commission

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care is an Australian Government agency that leads and coordinates national improvements in the safety and quality of health care based on the best available evidence. By working in partnership with patients, carers, clinicians, the Australian, state and territory health systems, the private sector, managers and healthcare organisations, the Commission aims to ensure that the health system is better informed, supported and organised to deliver safe and high-quality care. www.safetyandquality.gov.au

About the Clinical Care Standards

A clinical care standard comprises a small number of nationally agreed quality statements. They describe the care that health professionals and health services should be providing to patients for a specific clinical condition or defined part of a clinical pathway in line with current best evidence. Clinical care standards indicators help health services review the performance of their organisation and make improvements in the care they provide.

The Commission develops clinical care standards in partnership with clinicians, researchers and consumers. Clinical guidelines form the evidence base for the clinical care standards. The Commission has previously released clinical care standards on cataract, peripheral intravenous catheters, third and fourth degree perineal tears, colonoscopy, venous thromboembolism, heavy menstrual bleeding, antimicrobial stewardship, acute coronary syndromes, acute stroke, delirium, hip fracture and osteoarthritis of the knee.

ⁱ Mullins RJ, Wainstein BK, Barnes EH, Liew WK, Campbell DE. Increases in anaphylaxis fatalities in Australia from 1997 to 2013. *Clinical & Experimental Allergy* 2016;46:1099–1110. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cea.12748>

ⁱⁱ Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy. Food allergy [Internet]. 2019 [cited 2020 Aug 3]. Available from: <https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/food-allergy/food-allergy>