

Epinephrine Pen Acquisition and Use Factsheet

Background

Epinephrine injection is used to treat life-threatening allergic reactions caused by insect bites, latex, and other causes. Symptoms of allergic reaction include wheezing, shortness of breath, low blood pressure, hives, itching, swelling, stomach cramps, diarrhea, and loss of bladder control. Epinephrine is in a class of medications called sympathomimetic agents. It works by relaxing the muscles in the airways and tightening the blood vessels.

Iowa State University (ISU) employees who, as part of their daily work activities, are exposed to bee/wasp venom or other workplace hazards that may result in an allergic reaction could potentially be at risk and may need an epinephrine pen (EpiPen).

Acquisition

Workplace Hazard Exists

ISU employees who have workplace hazards that may result in an allergic reaction must indicate on the ISU Occupational Medicine Program's [Hazard Inventory form](#) that they are at risk (Animals: Bees/Wasps). Employees who are known to have a systemic allergic reaction to the venom should carry, or have available at a moment's notice, an epinephrine dispensing pen. To acquire an EpiPen for workplace use, the employee must obtain a prescription from the Occupational Medicine physician. ISU's Occupational Medicine staff provide documented training to the participants. Contact ISU Occupational Medicine to schedule an appointment (515-294-2056). Once an exam and training have been completed, the EpiPen may be acquired at a local pharmacy. This service will be charged to the requesting department and not to the individual.

No Workplace Hazard Exists

ISU employees who do **not** have workplace hazards that may result in an allergic reaction but are nonetheless known to have a systemic allergic reaction to the venom should carry, or have available at a moment's notice, an epinephrine dispensing pen. To acquire an EpiPen, the employee should obtain a prescription from their private physician and then acquire it through their pharmacy.

Emergency Use

Individuals with prescribed EpiPens must have them readily available when working in areas associated with apiaries/wasps. The EpiPens should be placed in the first aid kits and will be administered by First Responders (CPR, AED, and First Aid) who have been trained to use them. ISU's Occupational Medicine staff will train and document with an outline of the training, date, and participants. Contact Occupational Medicine for an appointment (515) 294-2056.

Disposal

EpiPen users must observe the expiration date of the individual pens and replace accordingly. Expired EpiPens are considered hazardous waste and must be returned to the pharmacy where they were purchased for proper disposal.

Students

Students who are known to have a systemic allergic reaction to bee/wasps venom may acquire an EpiPen from their pharmacy of choice with a prescription from their private physician or doctor.

Procedures

1. Personnel who will be working in apiaries or with stinging insects should complete a [Hazard Inventory](#). ISU EH&S or Ames Laboratory Environmental Safety and Health (ESH) will determine whether there is an occupational bee/wasp sting hazard.
2. If there is an occupational risk, personnel will communicate with Occupational Medicine about the need for a prescribed EpiPen.
3. Each individual prescribed an EpiPen must have basic training in the use of first aid and EpiPens. First aid training is coordinated by EH&S in the CPR, AED, and First Aid training courses. EpiPen training will be provided by the Occupational Medicine office. Documentation of this training will be kept by Occupational Medicine.
4. Once training is complete the prescribed personnel can procure and EpiPen from a local pharmacy.
5. Epi Pens should be kept in a first aid kit. Research groups will acquire the same number of first aid kits as personnel who are prescribed EpiPens to take to the field locations where the groups will work/research. The first aid kit should be purchased from Central Stores to ensure it meets the needs defined in the ISU first aid kit guidelines.
6. The researcher will be responsible for accounting for and maintaining the first aid kits, including keeping the EpiPens stocked, ensure any expired items are replaced, etc.
7. If an EpiPen is used, that incident should be reported to Occupational Medicine and a replacement EpiPen procured from a local pharmacy.

Resources

- [National Institutes of Health](#)
- [Occupational Medicine Program](#)
- [Hazard Inventory for Occupational Medical Surveillance](#)