Recognizing Anaphylaxis in Infants and Toddlers

A Symptom Recognition Guide for Parents and Caregivers of Young Children.
This companion resource is designed to be used along with your Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan.

SEVERE SIGNS/SYMPTOMS*

	For all ages, look for...[1]	In young children, also look for...[2, 3, 4]
Respiratory / Airways	**Shortness of breath, wheezing, or coughing**	Belly breathing, fast breathing, nasal flaring, chest or neck tugging
	Tight or hoarse throat	Hoarse voice, hoarse cry, barky or croup-like cough, unexplained drooling
	Trouble breathing or swallowing	
	Swelling of lips or tongue that bothers breathing	
Cardiovascular (Heart)	**Skin color is pale or has a bluish color**	Mottling of the skin, pale appearance in lighter skin or dusky appearance in darker skin, particularly on the lips, tongue or gums
	Weak pulse	Fast heartbeat not related to crying or other causes, usually with other symptoms
	Fainting or dizziness	Wobbly appearance, limp, floppy or poor head control
Skin	**Many hives or redness over body**	Hives that look red on lighter skin and darker, purplish or closer to natural skin tone in children with skin of color, obvious swelling on the face
Gastrointestinal (Gut)	**Vomiting or diarrhea (if severe or combined with other symptoms)**	Throwing up more than once or throwing up that occurs with other symptoms, large amounts of diarrhea or diarrhea that occurs with other symptoms
Neurologic (Behavior)	**Feeling of "doom," confusion, altered consciousness or agitation**	Lethargic, difficult to wake up, withdrawn, unexpected crankiness, inconsolable crying

MILD SIGNS/SYMPTOMS**

	For all ages, look for...[1]	In young children, also look for...[2, 3, 4]
Upper Respiratory / Mucus Membranes	**Itchy nose, sneezing, itchy mouth**	Tongue thrusting or pulling, repetitive lip licking or licking of hands or objects, throat itching, ear pulling, scratching, putting fingers in the ears, eye rubbing, eye itching
Skin	**A few hives**	Skin scratching or rubbing skin
Gastrointestinal (Gut)	**Mild stomach nausea or discomfort**	Hiccups, spit-up that is not routine (more intense than normal), arching of the back, putting knees to chest

* If after exposure to allergen, severe symptoms are present in one or more body system, treat with epinephrine and follow your emergency plan.

** If mild symptoms are present in more than one body system, treat with epinephrine and follow your emergency plan.

American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology

Sources:
[1] American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan
[2] FAMP-IT.org
[3] JACI: In Practice, Jan. 2021 – DOI: 10.1016/j.jaip.2020.11.005
[4] JACI: In Practice, Aug. 2024 – PMCID: PMC11493081

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