

Briefing Document: Adrenaline Autoinjectors in Schools

Background

The May 2014 Drug Safety Update¹ from the MHRA advises that people who have been prescribed an adrenaline auto-injector because of the risk of anaphylaxis should carry two with them at all times for emergency, on-the-spot use. After every use of an adrenaline auto-injector, an ambulance should be called (even if symptoms are improving), the individual should lie down with their legs raised and, if at all possible, should not be left alone. This recommendation has raised some uncertainty with regard to prescribing for school age children, particularly relating to the number of injectors to be prescribed, and whether or not the school should keep prescribed stock injectors.

The Cornwall Area Prescribing Committee has agreed guidance for prescribers based on communication and recommendations from Anaphylaxis Campaign, the UK charity².

Prescribing

Anaphylaxis Campaign supports the MHRA guidance with regard to children having two injectors with them at all times. However their advice is different depending on the age of the child.

- For younger children up to and possibly including those in Year 5 at school, two adrenaline auto-injectors should accompany the child to school. These should be handed to the child's teacher who can keep them in proximity of the child during the day. The injectors should then be handed back to the parents at the end of school. For this particular age group, the school should probably hold two prescribed injectors for the child as back-up. This may entail the prescribing of up to four auto-injectors in one go.
- From Year 5 onwards, and into secondary school the children/young people could be trusted to carry their own injectors and keep them with them at all times as per the MHRA guidance. Obviously there may be individual cases where there is an issue trusting them to do so. In these cases, the school could hold prescribed stock.

Presentation

Although the EpiPen products (EpiPen³ and EpiPen Jr⁴) are the local formulary choices, several other brands are available. Ensure that the patient has been trained to use the brand of auto-injector that has been prescribed because injection technique varies between brands.

Prescribers may wish to consider branded prescribing for consistency.

Used auto-injectors can be given to the ambulance crew for disposal.

Dates on all auto-injectors held should be regularly checked to ensure they do not go out of date.

References

1. <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/DrugSafetyUpdate/CON418520>
2. <http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk>
3. <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/26974>
4. <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/26975>