



# Department of Nursing POLICY AND PROCEDURE

POLICY NUMBER: 271  
VERSION: 2

## SUBJECT: VACCINES: MANAGEMENT OF REACTIONS IN ADULTS, ADOLESCENTS, AND CHILDREN

---

**PURPOSE:** To identify interventions to be used for patients experiencing vaccine reactions.

**POLICY:** Patients will be observed for at least 15 minutes after receiving a vaccine in case a reaction occurs.

**GUIDELINES:** Table of Potential Reactions and Suggested Management

Reaction	Symptoms	Management
Localized	Soreness, redness, itching, or swelling at the injection site	Apply a cold compress to the injection site. Ask the provider to order an analgesic or an anti-pruritic medication.
	Slight bleeding	Apply an adhesive compress over the injection site.
	Continuous bleeding	Place thick layer of gauze pads over the site and maintain direct and firm pressure; raise the bleeding injection site above the level of the patient's heart.
Psycho-logical fright and syncope	Fright before injection is given.	Have patient sit or lie down for the vaccination.
	Extreme paleness, sweating, coldness of the hands and feet, nausea, light-headedness, dizziness, weakness or visual disturbances	Have patient lie flat or sit with head between knees for several minutes. Loosen tight clothing. Ensure airway remains open. Apply cool, damp cloths to neck and face.
	Fall without loss of consciousness.	Examine the patient to determine if injury is present before attempting to move the patient. Place the patient flat on back with feet elevated.
	Loss of consciousness	Check the patient to determine if injury is present before attempting to move the patient. Place the patient flat on back with feet elevated. Call 911 if the patient does not recover immediately.
Anaphylaxis	Sudden or gradual onset of generalized itching, erythema, hives, severe bronchospasm, shortness of breath, swelling of lips, face or throat, shock.	Prepare to administer aqueous epinephrine and/or Benadryl as outlined in the Emergency Medical Protocol for management of anaphylactic reactions. Maintain the patient's airway.

<b>POLICY NO:</b> 271	<b>SUBJECT:</b> VACCINES: MANAGEMENT OF REACTIONS IN ADULTS, ADOLESCENTS, AND CHILDREN	<b>Page 2 of 3</b>
--------------------------	--	--------------------

**PROCEDURE-MILD REACTION:**

1. Nursing staff must be alert for the signs and symptoms of a vaccine reaction.
2. Nursing will contact the provider for any signs of reaction.

**INITIAL MANAGEMENT OF ANAPHYLAXIS**

1. Evaluate patient for anaphylaxis.
2. Call a Code Assist for any signs of a serious reaction.

**Symptoms of Anaphylaxis in All Age Groups**

	<b>Infants</b>	<b>Children &amp; Adults</b>
<b>Onset of symptoms</b>	Within 15 minutes of injection	Within 15 minutes of injection
<b>First symptoms</b>	Unable to complain	Dizzy, itching, difficulty breathing
<b>Level of Consciousness</b>	Irritable, high pitched cry, anxious, restless	Some confusion or less responsive, usually no loss of consciousness
<b>Appearance</b>	Flushed (pink-red) with hives	Flushed (pink-red), hives, facial swelling
<b>Vital Signs</b>	Pulse above 200	Rapid, weak pulse and low blood pressure
<b>Breathing</b>	Rapid with retractions	Wheezing with progressive distress

3. Have the patient lie flat or elevate back for comfort. Infants may be held by parent.
4. Obtain vital signs and pulse oximetry.
5. Continue to monitor patient closely and plan to give epinephrine with a provider order.

**DOCUMENTATION:**

1. An emergency response record is required for all Code Assists.
2. Complete a Vaccine Adverse Event Report System form (VAERS) for all reactions.
3. Complete vaccine reaction documentation as a short note in the electronic medical record.

<b>POLICY NO:</b> 271	<b>SUBJECT:</b> VACCINES: MANAGEMENT OF REACTIONS IN ADULTS, ADOLESCENTS, AND CHILDREN	<b>Page 3 of 3</b>
--------------------------	--	--------------------

**REFERENCES:**

Medical Management of Vaccine Reactions in Adult Patients (7/16) retrieved 09/21/2017, from [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3082.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3082.pdf)

Medical Management of Vaccine Reactions in Children and Teens (7/16) retrieved 09/21/2017, from [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3082a.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3082a.pdf)

VAERS and VERP: Report Vaccine Adverse Events and Administration Errors (12/14) retrieved from [www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3082a.pdf](http://www.immunize.org/catg.d/p3082a.pdf)

Approved By: Susan Knapp (CHIEF NURSING OFFICER I)	
Date: 06/24/2015	Original Date: 07/01/2008
Reviewed: 09/22/2017	Next Review Date: 09/22/2019
Supersedes:	