

Consumers Can Help Prevent  
Harmful Medication Incidents

## SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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### Epipen or Epipen Jr? Your child's weight matters.

An anaphylactic reaction (also known as anaphylaxis) is a severe allergic reaction that can come on quickly and may be life-threatening. Anyone who has an anaphylactic reaction must immediately seek medical help. Epinephrine is usually the first medicine given because it slows down the allergic reaction and may prevent the reaction from getting worse.

People who know they are at risk of anaphylaxis should always carry epinephrine with them. Epinephrine is a medicine that is given by injection. It is available in a special auto-injector device that is easy to use. When used correctly, the device injects a dose of epinephrine and can give the person more time to get medical help. The proper dose of epinephrine depends on the person's weight.



For adults and children weighing  
30 kg (66 lbs) or more



For children weighing  
15–30 kg (33–66 lbs)



**EpiPen** is an epinephrine auto-injector that is suitable for adults and children weighing more than 30 kilograms (kg) (66 pounds). EpiPen injects an epinephrine dose of 0.3 mg.

**EpiPen Jr** contains a different strength of epinephrine and injects a lower dose. It is suitable only for younger or smaller children who weigh 15–30 kg (33–66 pounds). EpiPen Jr injects an epinephrine dose of 0.15 mg.

Image courtesy of Pfizer Canada

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report about the wrong type of EpiPen being dispensed for a child who weighed more than 30 kg. The prescription was written correctly for EpiPen, but the pharmacy dispensed EpiPen Jr by mistake. Fortunately, the child's mother noticed the error and had the pharmacy dispense the correct type of EpiPen for her child.

In Canada, epinephrine auto-injectors are available from community pharmacies with or without a prescription. Other auto-injectors, such as Twinject and Allerject, also come in 0.3 mg and 0.15 mg dose strengths. If you need an auto-injector for your child:

- Make sure that your prescriber and pharmacist know how much your child weighs.
- Remember that low-strength epinephrine auto-injectors are only for children weighing 15–30 kg.
- Before leaving the pharmacy, double check that you have the correct strength of epinephrine auto-injector for your child's weight.

Read more about [epinephrine auto-injectors](http://www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter_epinephrine.html), and how to use them properly.  
([www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter\\_epinephrine.html](http://www.safemedicationuse.ca/newsletter/newsletter_epinephrine.html))