

VASOVAGAL EPISODE OR ANAPHYLAXIS IN ADULTS

COVID-19

VACCINATION



Western Health

HUB



Immunisation providers must be able to distinguish between a vasovagal episode (faint), convulsion and anaphylaxis

A Vasovagal episode (faint) is relatively common after the vaccination of adults and adolescents

Anaphylaxis following routine vaccination is very rare, but can be fatal. A strong central pulse persists during a vasovagal episode (faint) or convulsion.

Vasovagal episode	Anaphylaxis
Onset	
> immediate – usually within minutes of, or during, vaccine administration	> usually within 15 minutes, but can occur within hours of vaccine administration
Respiratory	
> normal respiration - may be shallow, but not laboured	> cough, wheeze, stridor, hoarseness > signs of respiratory distress (tachypnoea, cyanosis, rib recession) > upper airway swelling (lip, throat, tongue, uvula or larynx)
Cardiovascular	
> bradycardia – weak/absent peripheral pulse- but with strong central pulse (carotid) > hypotension – usually transient and corrects in supine position > loss of consciousness – improves once supine or head-down position	> tachycardia, weak/absent central pulse > hypotension – sustained and no improvement without specific treatment (in infants and young children, limpness and pallor are signs of hypotension) > loss of consciousness – no improvement once supine or in head-down position
Skin	
> generalised pallor, cool clammy skin	> pruritis (skin itchiness) > generalised skin erythema (redness), urticaria (weals) > angioedema (localised or generalised swelling of the deeper layers of the skin or subcutaneous tissues)
Gastrointestinal	
> nausea or vomiting	> abdominal cramps, diarrhoea, nausea or vomiting
Neurological	
> feels faint, light-headed	> sense of severe anxiety and distress

Reference: The Australian Immunisation Handbook <https://beta.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation>