

Top US medical group blasts EpiPen's 'exorbitant' costs

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The American Medical Association urged the maker of the EpiPen, a life-saving device that counteracts severe allergies, to drop its price Wednesday as public outrage mounted over a soaring cost hike.

Mylan Pharmaceuticals has come under fire for raising the price of epinephrine injectors from \$100 to \$500 over the course of five years, a price tag critics say puts it out of reach for many parents.

EpiPens are used when those suffering [severe allergies](#) are stung by bees or accidentally ingest peanuts to ward off potentially deadly reactions.

"Although the product is unchanged since 2009, the cost has skyrocketed by more than 400 percent during that period," AMA President Andrew Gurman said in a statement.

"The AMA has long urged the pharmaceutical industry to exercise reasonable restraint in drug pricing, and, with lives on the line, we urge the manufacturer to do all it can to rein in these exorbitant costs."

A petition on MoveOn.org calling on Mylan CEO Heather Bresch to "stop price-gouging" has garnered more than 129,000 signatures.

A pair of EpiPens costs just \$85 in France, the petition notes.

"Mylan, which has a near monopoly in the US, has seen its profits from the EpiPen alone skyrocket to \$1.2 billion a year," it says.

'Moral questions'

Asked at a White House press briefing about the EpiPen price hike, spokesman Josh Earnest declined to comment specifically on the company's strategy.

"I will observe, however, that pharmaceutical companies that often try to portray themselves as the inventors of lifesaving medication often do real damage to their reputation by being greedy and jacking up [prices](#) in a way that victimizes vulnerable Americans," he told reporters.

"And I think it raises significant questions, even [moral questions](#), in the minds of a lot of people."

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton also called for the EpiPen price to come down, noting that millions of people rely on the epinephrine injectors, which must be replaced every 12-18 months.

She called the price hike "outrageous—and it's just the latest troubling example of a company taking advantage of its consumers," in a statement on Facebook.

"It's wrong when drug companies put profits ahead of patients, raising prices without justifying the value behind them," added Clinton.

She said if elected, her plan would be to require pharmaceutical manufacturers "to explain significant price increases, and prove that any additional costs are linked to additional patient benefits and better value.

"Since there is no apparent justification in this case, I am calling on Mylan to immediately reduce the price of EpiPens."

Members of Congress have also expressed concern about the price hike,

and some have called for hearings on Capitol Hill to force Mylan executives to explain themselves.

Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar, whose daughter relies on EpiPen to protect her from the effects of anaphylaxis, a life-threatening allergic reaction, has called on the Federal Trade Commission to launch an anti-trust investigation.

"There does not appear to be any justification for the continual price increases of EpiPen," she said in a letter to the FTC.

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