

Affected by the EpiPen shortage? Here's what to do

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(HealthDay)—Production issues have made EpiPens hard to find in

some areas of the United States, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced Wednesday.

The devices give a shot of epinephrine to people who are hit by severe allergic reactions.

"Epinephrine is lifesaving, tightening the vessels to increase [blood pressure](#), and opening constricted airways," explained Dr. Robert Glatter, an emergency physician from New York City's Lenox Hill Hospital.

However, in a note posted Wednesday on its website, the FDA said that while EpiPens are available, there are "intermittent supply constraints." The shortages are being blamed on production delays at the [company](#) that makes the auto-injection devices for Mylan.

The FDA post came a day after *Bloomberg News* reported that more than 400 patients in 45 states were having trouble finding EpiPens and similar devices. Many patients said they couldn't obtain one of the devices, while others said they had to wait weeks to get one.

Glatter said allergy patients shouldn't panic, however. He's treated many who suffer from severe allergic reactions, or anaphylaxis, and he stressed that there are alternatives to the EpiPen.

However, "it's important that persons with a history of anaphylaxis and severe allergic reactions be knowledgeable in how to use a variety of epinephrine auto-injectors that are currently on the market, especially in the event that your particular brand is not available," Glatter said.

He stressed that preparation *before* a dangerous [reaction](#) strikes is key.

Practicing the steps needed to use a particular type of auto-injector can

help you "avoid feelings of anxiety and panic, which may interfere with your ability to think clearly and act rapidly in such a situation," Glatter said.

"One company makes a 'talking' injector that takes you through the exact steps to administer the [device](#), and may help to calm those who experience anxiety during the process," he said.

"Another company requires you to remove a specific cap before injecting the medication, while another company does not offer an auto-injector, but requires you to actually push the plunger of a syringe to inject the medication," he explained.

There's one other alternative if you can't get an EpiPen at your pharmacy, Glatter said.

"While not ideal, it's still acceptable to use an EpiPen many years past its expiration date, based on multiple recent studies," he said. "Nearly 80 to 90 percent of the potency of the drug is still retained. As long as the EpiPen isn't discolored or cloudy, then it's safe to use."

More information: Robert Glatter, M.D., emergency physician, Lenox Hill Hospital, New York City; *Bloomberg News*

There's more on anaphylaxis at the [American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology](#).

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