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ALLERGIES CONTINUED

Anaphylaxis can include trouble breathing, chest tightness, dizziness, fainting, itching and hives, and swelling of the mouth and throat.

Some asthma medications, including Xolair, are designed to treat the allergy triggers for asthma, according to the Mayo Clinic. In people susceptible to these triggers, such allergens as pollen, dust mites and pet dander spark the release of allergy-causing antibodies. The medication works by blocking the action of these antibodies, thereby preventing the inflammation that makes it difficult to breathe.

In light of the small-but-potential risk associated with taking Xolair, Genentech advised that the injections be administered only in a health care setting by health care providers prepared to treat anaphylaxis.

After administering the drug, health care providers should observe the person for at least two hours, even if there was no reaction to the first dose, the FDA says. It also emphasized that those taking the drug should be aware of the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and instructed to seek immediate medical care if they experience allergic symptoms. A reaction can occur even as long as 24 hours after an injection.

"The majority of physicians who prescribe Xolair are allergists or pulmonologists, and most are aware of this potential adverse reaction," Dr. David Weldon, director of allergy and pulmonary lab services at Scott & White Clinic in College Station, Texas, told *HealthDay*.

Still, he added, people ought to be prepared. "It would be prudent that anybody who's on Xolair make sure they get one of the commercially available epinephrine sources like an EpiPen," he said.