

FOI 23/567

Dear

Thank you for your request under the Freedom of Information Act of July 28, we apologise for the delay in response. You requested:

*I have read the following article which mentions some MHRA analysis:*

*BBC News - Allergy emergencies double in recent years in England*  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-66330268>

*But I can't find said analysis on your website? (Or anywhere online).*

*I would like to know whether the analysis has controlled for a change in approach to anaphylactic reactions: my understanding (as just a teacher trained in responding to anaphylactic reactions) is that we now know there can be a dangerous second reaction (biphasic reaction) where the body struggles several hours after the first reaction. Therefore I believe far more people who have had a reaction are now admitted for monitoring for 6-12 hours after administration of an epipen, in case of this biphasic reaction. Is that right? Does this explain why the number of reactions with hospital stays has gone up so much, or was this procedure the norm 20 years ago too?*

*I think it's really important that the public are given an accurate picture of what is going on, especially as I feel that allergies are often misunderstood and not taken serious enough by a lot of people. The BBC article implies that allergies are significantly on the rise and we need to know if this is true!*

*I would appreciate a link to the full report and if it does not cover my concern about admissions due to recent procedure for the risk of biphasic reactions, I would like my email to be passed on to the researchers and a response about how they intend to rectify this please.*

On [02 August 2023](#) we published a press release which was intended to reinforce our recently issued guidance ([dating from 19 June 2023](#)) on which we believe the BBC article to have been based. However, the data which is quoted is provisional NHS England data. We (MHRA) have not commented on why the data shows a rise in admissions; we have only highlighted the figures in our release.

The figures showed that there were 25,721 hospital admissions for allergy and anaphylaxis in 2022/23, which was more than double the number of hospital admissions 20 years ago in 2002/03 (12,361 admissions). There has been a consistent yearly increase in allergy and anaphylaxis hospital admissions in the last 20 years, with the exception of 2020-21 where the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns are likely to have had an impact on the number of admissions.

This article by Anaphylaxis UK based on the previous year's data (2021/22) has a [graphical representation of the increase in admissions](#) which you may find of interest.

The reason for the rise in allergy and anaphylaxis hospital admissions is unknown. However, the increase in hospital admissions is unlikely to be the result of a single factor with diagnosis and understanding of anaphylaxis, including the risk of biphasic anaphylaxis and the need to monitor patients, improving over the last 20 years, as well as changes in guidance on food allergies such as when to introduce children to different foods.

In relation to your request for the publication of a full report, the data involved are the property of NHS England, drawn from their Hospital Episodes Statistics (HES) dataset. Diagnosis data are published annually in the HES Admitted Patient Care report. You can find previous years' data published on the [NHS Digital website](#). Our understanding is that the latest data for financial year 2022-23, as provided in our press release, is due for publication as confirmed on this part of the [NHS Digital website](#). The ICD-10 codes used to describe allergy and anaphylaxis conditions are set out in the data cut published in the link above.

If you are dissatisfied with the handling of your request, you have the right to ask for an internal review. Internal review requests should be submitted within two months of the date you receive this response and addressed to: [info@mhra.gov.uk](mailto:info@mhra.gov.uk)  
Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you were to remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the internal review, you would have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please bear in mind that the Information Commissioner will not normally review our handling of your request unless you have first contacted us to conduct an internal review. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

Yours sincerely

**MHRA Customer Experience Centre**

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