

Epi-Pen

Question:

On August 2, I had been stung by a bee or wasp. A sudden sensation of lightheadedness took over. I sat down, and felt my body slowly shut down. I felt as if everything in my body was coming to a nuclear ‘meltdown’ reaction and could not do anything to control what was occurring. Our local (Yiddish volunteer) Hatzalah corps tried to get a blood pressure reading but it did not register. I was told I needed a shot of epinephrine and was taken to the local hospital emergency room.

The question is that my allergist has said I must carry with me at all times a self injectionable cartridge, known in USA as EPI PEN so as to give me temporary protection against full anaphylactic shock.

Would I be allowed to carry this pen with me on shabbat as in our area we do not have an eruv?

Alice Frankl

Answer:

Your question was discussed with Rabbi Y. Y. Neuwirth (author of *Shmirath Shabbat Kehilchatah*) by Prof. A. S. Abraham (author of “*Nishmat Avraham*”). The halachic conclusion is quite clear: Since, if G-d forbid you are stung again you would be in a serious emergency situation, you may carry the EPI PEN with you on Shabbat. However, you must carry it in an unusual fashion. For example it could be tied to your arm or leg (using a bow knot) so that it is available for immediate use.

Note: A similar question was first discussed in North America in 1951 by Rabbi Gruenwald of Columbus, Ohio. Rabbi J. D. Bleich discussed the sources upon which this halacha is based in *Tradition* 16:5, page 89.

For further guidelines: See Prof. Avraham’s *Comprehensive Guide to Medical Halacha*, page 70, sect. 69, where a similar ruling appears with more details.

See further, his *Nishmat Avraham*, vol. 1, p. 125, note 3 where the following sources are adduced for this ruling: *Resp. Mishne Halachot* 7:56; *Shmirath Shabbath Ke-Hilchata* 84:7; *Resp. Maharash Engel* 3:43.