

Accidental self-injection of fish vaccines – information to the Medical Practitioner

Injection vaccines used for fish contain formalin-inactivated bacterial- and/or viral antigens, together with different types of oils as adjuvants, i.e. mineral oil.

The common dose is 0.05-0.1 ml. The dose is injected into the abdominal cavity of the fish, manually or mechanically. In event of accidental self-injection the entire dose or part of the dose may be injected into the finger of the operator.

Accidental self-injection with a fish vaccine can theoretically lead to an anaphylactic reaction that will need immediately attention and treatment according to current guidelines.

In event of suspected anaphylaxis, thorough follow-up and examination of the patient should be conducted in the time aftermath the self-injection. The best way to do this is at the Section of Clinical Allergology at Haukeland University Hospital.

In event of accidental self-injection where the dose is partially or fully injected, the critical issue is the amount of injected mineral oil. Oils used as adjuvants in fish vaccines are toxic to tissue and without surgical intervention (incision and irrigation) the result can be necrosis and amputation of a digit.

It is important that all occurrences of self-injection are examined by a surgeon to avoid further complications!

In addition to local reactions at the injection site, the person may also experience severe pain, local swelling, lymphangitis, lymphadenitis in the arm, nausea, vomiting and fever.

Antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs are not the only treatments indicated for these cases, the involved finger must be examined by a surgeon! Tetanus prophylaxis is not indicated.

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