

Table 2.3.1: Clinical features that may assist differentiation between a vasovagal episode and anaphylaxis

		Vasovagal episode	Anaphylaxis*
Onset		Immediate, usually within minutes of, or during, vaccine administration	Usually within 15 minutes, but can occur within hours, of vaccine administration
Symptoms/Signs	Respiratory	Normal respiration; may be shallow, but not laboured	Cough, wheeze, hoarseness, stridor, or signs of respiratory distress (e.g. tachypnoea, cyanosis, rib recession) Upper airway swelling (lip, tongue, throat, uvula or larynx)
	Cardiovascular	Bradycardia, weak/absent peripheral pulse, strong carotid pulse Hypotension – usually transient and corrects in supine position Loss of consciousness – improves once supine or in head-down position	Tachycardia, weak/absent carotid pulse Hypotension – sustained and no improvement without specific treatment (<i>Note: in infants and young children, limpness and pallor are signs of hypotension</i>) Loss of consciousness – no improvement once supine or in head-down position
	Skin	Generalised pallor, cool, clammy skin	Pruritus (skin itchiness), generalised skin erythema (redness), urticaria (weals) or angioedema (localised or general swelling of the deeper layers of the skin or subcutaneous tissues)
	Gastrointestinal	Nausea/vomiting	Abdominal cramps, diarrhoea, nausea and/or vomiting
	Neurological†	Feels faint, light-headed	Sense of severe anxiety and distress

* Modified from The Brighton Collaboration Case Definition Criteria for Anaphylaxis.⁶

† Neurological symptoms are not listed in the Brighton case definition criteria for anaphylaxis;⁶ however, symptoms of anxiety and distress, including feelings of impending doom, are reported in persons experiencing anaphylaxis.⁷