

Did you know?

Penicillin is the most commonly reported drug allergy

but

nine out of ten patients who report a penicillin allergy are not truly allergic¹



Many people think they are allergic to an antibiotic, which is usually a penicillin.

If you are allergic to one type of antibiotic, it does not mean you are allergic to all types of antibiotics.

If you have a confirmed antibiotic allergy, ensure you are able to identify the antibiotic generic name (i.e. the active ingredient) and describe your reaction to all of your healthcare providers.

Find out more

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Do you have an antibiotic allergy?
What you should know - Information for parents and carers

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Do you have an antibiotic allergy?

What you should know



An antibiotic allergy occurs when your body's immune system mistakes the antibiotic for something harmful. Your body then releases the chemical in response, which cause your allergic symptoms (e.g. rash, difficulty breathing).

Antibiotic allergy labels prevent patients from receiving antibiotics to which they have badly reacted to. However, an inappropriate antibiotic allergy label can result in:

- the use of less effective and broader antibiotics which may lead to treatment-resistant superbugs
- longer hospital stay
- use of more toxic antibiotics
- use of more expensive antibiotics
- admission to intensive care unit²



Removing the allergy label when an allergy is not present means healthcare providers can prescribe safer, less expensive and more appropriate antibiotics.

A family history of penicillin allergy does not mean that you will have a penicillin allergy³



How do I find out if I am allergic to an antibiotic?

You may have an allergy assessment done in hospital, or you can ask your GP to explain allergy testing. If you decide to get tested, you'll be referred to an allergy clinic, allergist or immunologist specialising in drug allergy testing.



Do I still need to have an allergy assessment done if I already know I'm allergic to an antibiotic?

Allergies can change over time. Even if you already know that you are allergic, it is worth discussing your reaction with an allergist or immunologist. You can also discuss other antibiotic options in case you need these in the future. Speak to your doctor for more information and ask if they recommend this for you.

Only 1-2% of patients with a penicillin allergy label are positive on formal testing⁴

References:

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