

# Penicillin allergies



## What is a penicillin allergy?

A penicillin allergy is a reaction, caused by the immune system, triggered by penicillin. It can be mild, moderate or severe (life threatening).

Signs of an allergy include:

- Rash
- Collapse
- Swollen lips or tongue

*Certain allergies can mean that some antibiotics should not be prescribed for you in future.*



## How is an allergy different to a side effect?

Antibiotic side effects are sometimes incorrectly called *allergies*.

All medicines can cause side effects.

Examples of side effects are:

- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea
- Headache or dizziness
- Thrush

*These are not allergies and it may be safe for you to be prescribed that antibiotic again.*



## I have a family member with penicillin allergy. Should I avoid penicillin?

A family history of penicillin allergies is not a reason for avoiding penicillin.



## I had a rash when I was a child after penicillin—should I avoid it now?

Allergies to antibiotics may disappear over time.

Many people who report a reaction in childhood are able to take penicillin as an adult.

*Speak to your doctor for more information.*



## What should I do if I suspect a penicillin allergy?

Seek medical attention immediately.

Write down exactly what happened and what antibiotic caused the problem.

*Some people may be referred for allergy testing to clarify which antibiotics are safe to use in the future.*

*This document should not replace the advice of your relevant health care professional.*