

# Penicillin Allergy

## De-labelling in Adult Patients

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### What is a penicillin antibiotic?

Antibiotics are used to treat or prevent some types of bacterial infection. There are different groups of antibiotics. One group is penicillin antibiotics; these are used to treat a number of common infections.

These are examples of penicillin antibiotics:

- Amoxicillin
- Flucloxacillin
- Co-amoxiclav

### What is a penicillin allergy?

A penicillin allergy is an allergic reaction to a penicillin antibiotic.

For most people, this allergic reaction will be a mild skin reaction (e.g. rash and itchiness).

The most severe allergic reaction is anaphylaxis. This is rare and occurs in 1 in 10,000 people taking penicillin. Patients have a widespread rash, swelling, breathing difficulties and can collapse. It is life-threatening but there are treatments to safely manage this reaction.

Common side-effects of antibiotics include diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. These are **not** allergic reactions. Although these side-effects can be unpleasant, this does not mean you need to fully avoid penicillin antibiotics.

### Why is this important to me?

Penicillin antibiotics are excellent treatments for many infections. If you have a penicillin allergy, you will be given non-penicillin antibiotics when you need them. This is associated with worse outcomes for you.

More than 90% of people with a penicillin allergy label are not allergic. You may have been wrongly labelled as having a penicillin allergy. If you can have your penicillin allergy removed, you will have the best antibiotic options for infections when you need them.

### What does penicillin de-labelling involve?

Your medical team will undertake a risk assessment to check it is safe for you to have this procedure. They will ask you some questions and score your risk as low, moderate or high. This test will only be offered to you if you are a low risk patient and it is deemed safe.

If you are suitable for this procedure and you wish to go ahead, you will be given one tablet of a penicillin antibiotic in a safe clinical environment and monitored closely for one hour. If you take a regular anti-histamine, you will need to stop taking these 72 hours before the challenge and in the seven days after the challenge. If you take steroids, you may need to stop taking these but we will discuss this further with you during the assessment.

## What happens after the test?

Once you have taken the penicillin tablet, you will be monitored for one hour in a safe clinically environment. You will have observations done at the end of the hour.

- If you are well and not had an allergic reaction, you will be discharged home.
- In the unlikely event you have an allergic reaction, you may need to stay for longer for monitoring and treatment.

You will be contacted by telephone approximately one week after the test to check you have had no new symptoms.

- If you have no reaction, you will be able to safely have penicillin antibiotics in the future.
- If the test confirms you are allergic to penicillin, you should strictly avoid penicillin in the future.

This will be documented in your hospital records. We will ask your GP to update your community records.

If you develop a rash within 7 days of taking the penicillin tablet, please inform us within 24 hours of the rash appearing. You should contact the ward or department in which you had the penicillin challenge. Please ask your clinical team to fill in their contact details below:

Ward / department name: .....

.....

Phone number: .....

## Are there any risks or side-effects?

During the challenge, you will be closely monitored in a safe environment by trained healthcare professionals.

There is a small chance you will experience side-effects such as nausea.

If you do experience an allergic reaction, this will most likely be a skin reaction (e.g. rash and itchiness). This should develop slowly over hours to days of taking the penicillin antibiotic.

Anaphylaxis is rare (1 in 10,000). If this occurs, you will be treated in a safe environment by medical staff who are trained to deal with this.

## What do I do if want to have this test?

We will need your written consent. A member of staff will complete a consent form with you which will be kept in your medical records. We will then arrange for you to have the test. If you change your mind and no longer wish to participate, this will not affect your other treatment.

## What if I do not want to have this test?

Your medical notes will continue to state you are allergic to penicillin. You will not be given penicillin in the future. You can re-consider having the test at any point.

This information can be offered in other formats on request, including a language other than English and Braille.

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