



Penicillin allergy test

Information for patients



Written by the **All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre** and the **All Wales Medicines Strategy Group**. It is an easy read version of 'Penicillin Allergy Test - Patient Information Leaflet'.

How to use this booklet



This is an easy read booklet. But you may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. We have explained what they mean after each hard word.



Where the document says **we**, this means your healthcare team.



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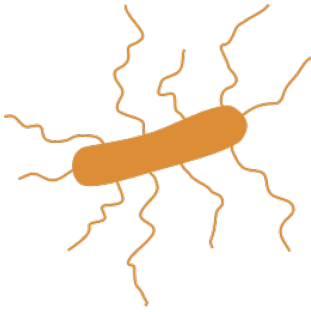
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What is penicillin?

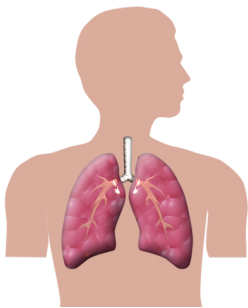


Penicillin is a type of **antibiotic**.



Antibiotics are medicines used to treat infections caused by certain types of bacteria.

Penicillin works very well to treat infections like:



- pneumonia - an infection of one or both of the lungs



- tonsillitis - an infection of the tonsils at the sides of your throat



- and skin infections.

What is an allergy to penicillin?



Some people may be **allergic** to penicillin or similar antibiotics.

An **allergy** is when your body reacts badly to something. For a very small number of people an **allergy** can be very serious.



For most people an **allergy** to penicillin causes a mild skin reaction or rash. This develops slowly over several hours or days.



In a tiny number of people an **allergy** can be serious and cause **anaphylaxis**.

Anaphylaxis is a serious allergic reaction. It happens very quickly – often less than 1 hour after taking penicillin, and always within 2 hours.

Anaphylaxis can be life threatening. It can cause:



- a rash that spreads fast



- swelling of the mouth, throat or tongue



- difficulty breathing.



It is **very rare** to have a serious **allergy** to penicillin.

Can I have an allergy if a family member is allergic to penicillin?



Penicillin **allergy** does not run in families.



If you have a relative who is **allergic** to penicillin, it does not mean that you will also be **allergic** to it.

What is the difference between an allergy and side effects?



Side effects are different to **allergic** reactions.



Side effects are when you take medicine and it may make you feel ill. Side effects do not happen to everyone. They are usually mild and nothing to worry about, and they do not last long.

The most common side effects from taking penicillin include:



- skin rashes



- being sick



- feeling sick



- diarrhoea – runny poo



Having side effects to penicillin does not mean you need to stop taking penicillin. You can take medicines to help you manage the side effects if needed.

Why is penicillin important?

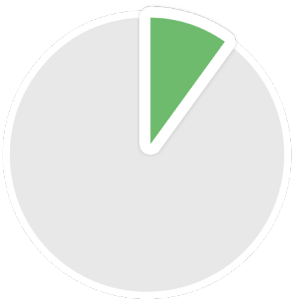


Penicillin can work better than other types of antibiotics to treat certain infections.



It is important to find out if you are **allergic** to penicillin. To make sure you are given the best antibiotic for you.

How common is allergy to penicillin?



Around 1 out of 10 people say they have an **allergy** to penicillin.



But evidence shows that around 9 out of 10 people who say they have an **allergy** to penicillin might not be **allergic** to it. They might just have had side effects from taking penicillin.

About the penicillin allergy test

Why am I being offered an allergy test?

You will be offered a test if:



- your health record says that you have an **allergy** to penicillin



- and the healthcare team has assessed that it is safe to do the test.



Doing the test in hospital means that they can check on you.



And you can get treatment if needed while having the test done.

What are the benefits of testing?

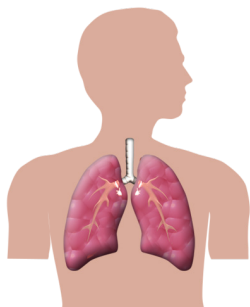


If the test shows that you are not **allergic** to penicillin, we will update your medical record.



If you are not allergic to penicillin, you can take penicillin antibiotics in the future.

This gives you more treatment options:



- if you get a common infection, like a skin or chest infection



- if you need to take antibiotics before an operation.

How is the test done?



We will ask you to sign a **consent form** before the test.



Consent means you agree to do the test. And you understand what the risks and side effects might be.



You will be able to ask any questions.



You will be given a dose of **amoxicillin**. This is a type of penicillin antibiotic.



The healthcare team will carefully check you for any **allergic** reactions. And other side effects.

What are the possible risks and side effects?



Side effects can be mild. Like feeling sick.



You might get an **allergic** reaction. This is why we do the test in hospital.



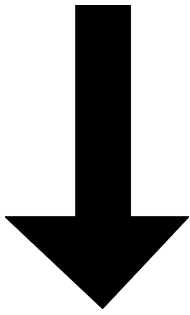
About 1 in 20 people will have an itchy rash over several hours or days.



A very small number of people may get a serious reaction or **anaphylaxis**.



Anaphylaxis is very rare.



We would only offer the test to people who have a very low risk of an **allergic** reaction.



If you have an **allergic** reaction, we will give you treatment straight away to stop it.

Do I need to do the test?



It is your choice to have the test or not.



If you choose not to have the test, there will be no change to the treatment you get in hospital.



You can decide to have the test at any time.

What happens after the test?



We will talk to you about the result.



You will get a copy of the test results.

If the test shows you **do not** have an **allergic** reaction to penicillin:



- You will be able to take penicillin antibiotics if you need them.



- We will update your medical record.



- We will write to your GP to tell them the results of the test.

If the test shows that **you are allergic** to penicillin:



- Your medical record will say that you are **allergic** to penicillin.



- You should not take penicillin antibiotics in the future.



- We will tell your GP about your test result.

I have a penicillin allergy

Please do not prescribe any medicine that contains penicillin (see list on other side)



These antibiotics have penicillin in them:

- Amoxicillin
- Ampicillin
- Benzylpenicillin
- Co-amoxiclav (Augmentin®)
- Co-fluampicil (flucloxacillin + ampicillin)
- Flucloxacillin
- Penicillin (phenoxymethylpenicillin)
- Piperacillin/tazobactam (Tazocin®)
- Pivmecillinam
- Temocillin

- You will be given an **allergy card**. You must always keep your card with you.



If the results were unclear, you may be referred to a specialist for further assessment.

What happens to the information about the results?



This is a new service. It is important that we collect information about the results of the tests we do.



This will help the healthcare team check how well our testing service works.



We will keep your personal information private. We will remove your personal information from the results we collect.



If you have a rash or any other reaction after leaving hospital, contact your healthcare team.

Phone: