

Think you're allergic to penicillin?

Have you been tested to know for sure?

Chances are, you aren't truly allergic...

The Facts:

Up to 90% of patients who think they are allergic to penicillin are not really allergic when assessed by skin testing. This means almost 9 out of every 10 patients who claim to have an allergy to penicillin aren't really allergic and can safely take penicillin and related antibiotics.¹

How could I NOT be allergic?

Over-reporting of penicillin allergy happens for many reasons, the most common are:

- **Symptom Confusion**

A rash, originally thought to be caused by penicillin, may have been caused by the illness for which you were being treated.

- **Immune System Changes**

Many patients outgrow allergies as their immune system matures, so even if you were truly allergic, you may not be now.

Penicillin is a safe, effective antibiotic treatment that has fewer side effects than many stronger alternatives. It is also very affordable treatment, and in many states, free!

Why does it matter?

- **Cost**

More aggressive antibiotics often cost more than penicillin and related drugs. In fact, penicillin-allergic patients can pay as much as 60% more for treatment than those without penicillin allergy.²

- **A More Appropriate Treatment**

Penicillin is often the preferred treatment for infections. Being treated with penicillin can provide a more specific treatment with fewer side effects.

- **Combat Drug Resistance**

Using stronger antibiotics can increase the development of antibiotic resistance and can make it harder for your body to fight infections, which means newer antibiotics may not work if you need them for a more serious illness in the future.

When should I be tested?

Get tested now, BEFORE you get sick or need to be hospitalized for any reason. Although you can be tested at any time, having access to penicillin antibiotics can make any visit to the hospital or urgent care less expensive. Many penicillin allergic patients are automatically offered alternative antibiotics that are more costly. Penicillin allergy testing is simple, safe and reliable, and only takes about an hour.

How the test works:

Prick/Puncture Testing

Your physician or nurse will apply skin tests to your arm that will help indicate if a true penicillin allergy exists. If you receive a positive result, the test stops at this stage. However, you are more likely to have a negative result. This step takes approximately 20 minutes.

Intradermal Testing

If prick/puncture testing is negative, your physician or nurse will conduct intradermal testing. This consists of a few small injections usually placed on your upper arm, just under the skin's surface. This step takes approximately 20 minutes.

Oral Challenge

Your physician may elect to perform an oral challenge of penicillin to confirm a negative test result. This usually involves being given a test dose under observation and usually lasts 45-60 minutes.

Is getting tested right for you?

You may want to consider getting tested for penicillin allergy if:

- It has been more than 5 years since your last reaction to penicillin.
- You grew up thinking you were penicillin allergic.
- You have a history of reaction to penicillin antibiotics.

However, there are a few cases where a penicillin allergic reaction is severe enough to disqualify you from being tested:

- Stevens-Johnson syndrome
- Toxic epidermal necrolysis
- History of anaphylaxis when given penicillin antibiotics

¹ Salkind, JAMA, May 16, 2001 - Vol.285, No.19

² Macy, E., JACI 1998; 102:281 - 5

Call our office to schedule your appointment today.