

Are You *Truly* Allergic to Penicillin?

Did You Know?

The majority of penicillin allergies are **NOT** true allergies

- Only 1 out of 10 patients claiming to have a penicillin allergy are truly allergic when tested¹

Many patients outgrow their penicillin allergies

- Even if a patient was truly allergic in the past, up to 80% of patients lose their sensitivity after 10 years²

Side effects of penicillin may be misidentified as an allergy

- Non-allergic reactions, better known as side effects or intolerances, can include headache and upset stomach¹
- Allergic reactions usually occur immediately or within an hour. They can include²:
 - Hives
 - Wheezing or shortness of breath
 - Localized Swelling
 - Anaphylaxis

Patients may tolerate similar antibiotics after the original penicillin reaction and this can help rule out an ongoing penicillin allergy in the patient³

- An example of a similar antibiotic is amoxicillin
- Patients should communicate this history to a healthcare provider

Having a penicillin allergy may change a patient's treatment plan

- For patients needing treatment for bacterial infections, doctors will likely have to prescribe different antibiotics. These other antibiotics may not work as well, may cost more, and may increase antibiotic resistance.²

Facts From Your Community:

- Governor McMaster declared **Friday, September 28, 2018** as **Penicillin Allergy Day** in South Carolina⁵
- Select local hospitals have recently implemented **pharmacist-driven penicillin allergy skin testing services** for eligible patients in the hospital⁵
- The University of South Carolina College of Pharmacy is now offering a **Penicillin Allergy Assessment and Skin Testing (PAAST) Certificate Program** to train healthcare providers around the country⁶

What Can You Do?

1. Contact your local pharmacist and/or healthcare provider to help you investigate your penicillin allergy

- Your pharmacist can perform an allergy assessment and medication review to provide you with an up-to-date medication list with properly documented allergies
- Your healthcare provider can help determine next steps to investigate your allergy

2. Think back on your penicillin allergy and share this information with your local pharmacist and/or healthcare provider²

- What kind of reaction occurred?
- How long ago did the reaction occur?
- How was the reaction managed? Did you seek medical attention at the time or manage it yourself at home?
- What antibiotics have you taken since then? Did you tolerate them?

3. After investigation, if appropriate and available, discuss options with your local pharmacist and/or healthcare provider for allergy testing or challenge doses

- Example: Penicillin Allergy Skin Testing⁴
 - Two-step process: Scratch testing and intradermal testing
 - Test time is about 1 hour and results are available at the conclusion of the test
 - Currently available in select hospitals and clinics within South Carolina

Additional Resource: <https://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/library/allergy-library/penicillin-allergy-faq>



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1. Penicillin Allergy Facts. PRE-PEN®. <https://www.penallergytest.com/penicillin-allergy-facts/>. Accessed October 27, 2018.

2. Evaluation and Diagnosis of Penicillin Allergy for Healthcare Professionals | Community | Antibiotic Use | CDC. <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/community/for-hcp/penicillin-allergy.html>. Published October 31, 2017. Accessed October 27, 2018.

3. SIDP - Podcasts. <https://sidp.org/podcasts>. Accessed October 27, 2018.

4. McMaster declares Penicillin Allergy Day - College of Pharmacy | University of South Carolina. https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/pharmacy/centers/penicillin_allergy_skin_testing_certificate_program/paast_in_the_news/penicillin_allergy_day.php. Accessed October 27, 2018.

5. Penicillin Allergy Assessment & Skin Testing (PAAST) Certificate Program - College of Pharmacy | University of South Carolina. https://www.sc.edu/study/colleges_schools/pharmacy/centers/penicillin_allergy_skin_testing_certificate_program/. Accessed October 27, 2018.

6. Train-the-Trainer Program. PRE-PEN®. <https://www.penallergytest.com/implementation-2/train-the-trainer-program/>. Accessed October 27, 2018.