

**Are You Allergic to Penicillin?**

Did you know that **9 out of 10 patients** reporting a penicillin allergy are not truly allergic?

**Why?**

Many penicillin allergies are diagnosed in childhood, often from a rash that may have been caused from a virus, not a true penicillin allergy. Among patients with a true penicillin allergy, 8 in 10 are no longer allergic 10 years after the initial reaction.

**Why is it important to have an accurate allergy history?**

Penicillin and similar antibiotics in its class are the treatment of choice for many infections. Having an unverified penicillin allergy can make it difficult for your physician to prescribe an appropriate antibiotic which could lead to the following:

* Increased risk of side effects from alternative antibiotics
* Treatment failures for certain infections where penicillin is preferred
* Development of antibiotic resistance

**How can your penicillin allergy be evaluated?**

Penicillin allergies should first be evaluated by obtaining an accurate history of the allergic reaction. If you qualify, you could be referred to an allergist for a penicillin skin test which is a safe and effective procedure for identifying true allergic reactions to penicillin.

References

1. American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology
2. “Am I Allergic to Penicillin”, JAMA Patient Page, January 15, 2019