

UNDERSTANDING DRUG ALLERGIES

Adverse Drug Reactions Affect Up to 10 % of the World's Population

An Allergic Reaction is More Likely to Occur When Medications Are Injected

Medication is an important, and sometimes a life-saving component of managing and treating health conditions. However, for those with drug allergies, some medications can cause pain, discomfort and even life-threatening symptoms. Although rare, it is important to understand drug allergies and what treatment options are available. The following information provides a summary of drug allergy symptoms, treatment and prevention.

01 | Definition

Allergies are an abnormal reaction of the immune system to a harmless substance. With drug allergies, the body overreacts to certain medications, triggering a reaction. This is different than drug sensitivities, which does not involve the immune system.

Certain medications pose a higher risk than others, including:

- Antibiotics
- Aspirin and NSAIDs
- Anticonvulsants
- HIV/AIDS medications
- Chemotherapy
- Corticosteroid creams

02 | Symptoms

Symptoms are similar to other allergic reactions and are listed below. It is important to keep in mind that patients may not experience symptoms the first time a medication is administered. This is because the immune system may be producing antibodies and may not react until the medication is administered again. Symptoms are as follows:

- Itching, skin rash, hives
- Wheezing or breathing problems
- Edema

- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Anaphylaxis

03 | Treatment and Prevention

Once your medical provider has determined a drug allergy, the first step in treatment will be to discontinue the drug causing the reaction. In addition, the physician may prescribe antihistamines to calm the immune system response and corticosteroids to treat inflammation. In more severe cases epinephrine may be used to treat or prevent anaphylaxis.

After a drug allergy has been identified, patients should follow these steps to prevent future episodes:

- Inform health care providers
- Wear a medical alert bracelet
- Carry emergency epinephrine

For more information on drug allergy awareness and prevention, please visit:

<http://acaai.org/allergies/types/drug-allergies>

*Did You Know?
Adults over 60 are at a
higher risk of drug allergies*

References

<http://www.aaaai.org/conditions-and-treatments/allergies/drug-allergy>

<http://acaai.org/allergies/types/drug-allergies>

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/drug-allergy/basics/definition/con-20033346>