

Penicillin Allergy 101

10% OF THE US POPULATION REPORTS A PENICILLIN ALLERGY, BUT **ONLY 1%** ARE ACTUALLY ALLERGIC!



A penicillin allergy label is a big deal!

Associated with:

- More side effects and secondary infections
- Higher rates of antibiotic resistance
- Longer hospital stays
- Higher healthcare costs

Common reasons for **(mis)labeling**:

- **Viral or benign rashes** (non-urticarial or eczematous)
- **Mild side effects** (isolated headache, nausea, diarrhea)
- **Misconception that family history is associated with increased risk** of penicillin allergy

How a drug allergy actually presents:

- **Immediate reactivity** (within the first few doses of medication)
- History of **prior exposure** to a penicillin-based medication
- **Urticarial rash** (found in 90% of reactions)
- Complete resolution of symptoms within 24-48 hours of stopping medication
- **Other system involvement** (respiratory or GI distress)

Consider the history before you label!

When in doubt, refer to an allergist to help sort things out!

Interested in learning more through a 15 minute educational module? Email: vdimitriades@ucdavis.edu

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