

Challenge your PENICILLIN ALLERGY

1. Antibiotic allergies often resolve over time
2. Other antibiotics for patients with penicillin allergy may not work as well
3. Side effects like diarrhoea are not nice, but they are not allergies

What are penicillins?

- Penicillins are a group of antibiotic medicines used to treat infections such as urinary tract, skin and chest infections that are caused by bacteria.
- The penicillin medicines available in Aotearoa New Zealand include:

penicillin	flucloxacillin	piperacillin with tazobactam
amoxicillin	pivmecillinam	amoxicillin with clavulanic acid

What do we use penicillins for?

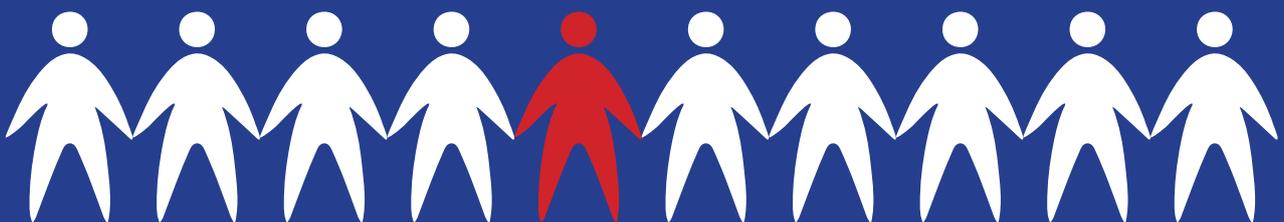
- Penicillins are often our first-choice antibiotics because they tend to be more effective and cause fewer problems like side effects or antibiotic resistance.
- They do not work for viral infections like colds, influenza or COVID-19. No antibiotic does.

What is a penicillin allergy?

- Many adults report having a penicillin allergy, but most (9 out of 10 adults) who believe they have an allergy can take penicillins safely.
- True penicillin allergy is rare (fewer than 5 out of 10,000 people) and may include anaphylaxis (an immediate life-threatening reaction), itchy rash, difficulty breathing, and swollen lips or tongue.
- Reactions like nausea, diarrhoea or thrush often occur with antibiotics but are side effects not allergies. Side effects are not nice, but if you are very sick with a bacterial infection the best antibiotic is usually a penicillin.
- Our immune systems change with time – penicillin allergies often disappear within 10 years.

What can I do?

- If you think you have a penicillin allergy, talk with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.
- 1 out of 2 adults (half) can have their penicillin allergy label removed after their healthcare team has asked some questions and looked at their medical history.
- Sometimes, further tests (like giving a test dose of the antibiotic under medical supervision) might be needed to work out if you have a penicillin allergy.
- If your healthcare team tells you that you no longer have an allergy, please let your GP and other healthcare team know that you can now safely take penicillins
- If you are one of the few people who have a true penicillin allergy, your healthcare team will help keep you safe. This will include ensuring your clinical records are accurate.



9 out of **10** people who think they have a penicillin allergy do not