

Penicillin – Is it an Allergy or a Side Effect?

Penicillins are a class of antibiotics used to treat a variety of infections. Penicillins are the most common reported drug allergy in the world. A true penicillin allergy can be difficult to distinguish from a side effect. Around 90% of reported penicillin allergies are not true allergies. True allergies usually occur within the first 30 minutes after administration and result in a more serious reaction. A reported penicillin allergy limits the use of many other antibiotics related to penicillin which accounts for almost half of the antibiotics on the market. It is important to differentiate between true allergies and side effects for optimal treatment. The following chart shows common side effects versus allergic reactions to penicillin and other related antibiotics.

Side Effect	Allergy
- Upset stomach	- Difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea	- Swelling of face, tongue, lips, or throat
- Headache	- Difficulty swallowing

