

Your health care provider wants to assess your penicillin allergy to ensure you are getting the best antibiotic when you have an infection

Who is eligible for penicillin allergy testing?

Most people with a suspected penicillin allergy are eligible for testing.

The process of removing an incorrect or resolved penicillin allergy is also called delabeling.

Testing should not be performed in people with certain severe reaction types. Two of these reactions include severe skin peeling and blistering, known as Steven-Johnson's syndrome (SJS), or toxic epidermal necrolysis syndrome (TENS). Your health care provider will have more information on other severe reaction types.

Why is testing important?

People who report a penicillin allergy often receive other antibiotics instead that cause more side effects.

Penicillins and other antibiotics like penicillin have been shown to work better for certain infections (i.e., antibiotics given before surgery or dental procedures).

If your health care provider discovers that you do not have a true penicillin allergy, they will have more options to treat your bacterial infection.

What testing is available?

There are 2 types of tests, which can be done separately or together:

- Small doses of penicillin taken by mouth
- Skin testing

Your provider will assess your reaction history to determine the best type of test for you. These tests will be performed by a trained medical professional in a monitored environment with supportive care available in case of a reaction.

Certain medications (i.e., antihistamines, prednisone, or medicines like prednisone) may interact with allergy tests. Your provider will give you more guidance prior to your appointment.

What should I expect from the skin test?

You will receive a very small dose of penicillin and a small dose of an inactive ingredient on your skin for comparison. Your provider may choose to perform two skin tests. Your health care team will monitor you for a reaction.

If there is no reaction to the skin test, your provider may determine that you do not have a penicillin allergy.

What should I expect from the test doses taken by mouth?

You will take a test dose of a penicillin. Your provider may choose to perform two test doses, starting with a lower dose. Your health care team will monitor you for a reaction.

If there is no reaction to the test dose(s), your provider may determine that you do not have a penicillin allergy.

What should I do if my allergy label is removed?

- Keep a record of the results of your allergy testing to give to all of your providers.
- Ask that your medical records show that you no longer have a penicillin allergy.

References:

1. CDC. Is It Really a Penicillin Allergy? <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/community/pdfs/penicillin-factsheet.pdf>
2. Khan DA, Banerji A, Blumenthal KG, et al. Drug allergy: A 2022 practice parameter update. *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*. 2022;150(6):1333-1393. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaci.2022.08.028>
3. AAAAI. Penicillin Allergy FAQ. Updated Sept 2023. <https://www.aaaai.org/tools-for-the-public/conditions-library/allergies/penicillin-allergy-faq>