

ANTIBIOTIC AWARENESS WEEK

ANTIBIOTIC ALLERGY OR SIDE EFFECT?

Knowing the difference can improve your care



November 18–24, 2022

Allergy vs Side Effect: what is the difference?

- An **allergy** often occurs quickly and is a result of the body reacting to an antibiotic
 - Symptoms include rash, hives, itching, difficulty breathing, facial or tongue swelling, or shortness of breath
- A **side effect** typically occurs more slowly and is caused by the antibiotic interacting with the body
 - Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, dry mouth, headache, or fatigue

Why is knowing the difference important?

- If an antibiotic is listed as an allergy instead of a side effect it will change the choice your healthcare provider makes when selecting which antibiotic they write for you
- This change could cause them to select a less active or safe medication in order to avoid your allergy
- This could then cause you to not receive the best antibiotic for your infection or have more side effects from the antibiotic that was selected to avoid your allergy

How to make sure your allergy history is accurate:

- The next time you visit your health care provider ask them to check your allergy list
- If you have an allergy listed and the reaction is a side effect and not an allergy ask your healthcare provider to change it to a side effect
- If you have an allergy listed as unknown, update it with more details about what happened when you took this medication. Then decide with your healthcare provider if this is an allergy or a side effect of the antibiotic

Created by Alabama Infectious Diseases Society (ALIDS)



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