Penicillin allergies

Action plan for clinicians

NCAS National Centre for Antimicrobial Stewardship

CAAR Centre for Antibiotic Allergy and Research

Penicillin allergy assessment questions

- What was the name of the penicillin?
- What were the details of the reaction?
- How was the reaction managed? Did it require treatment or hospitalisation?
- How long after taking the antibiotic did the reaction occur? How many years ago did the reaction occur?
- What antibiotics have been tolerated since?

Nature of the reaction	Action
Nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, diarrhoea **Side effect, not an allergy**	**Safe to prescribe penicillins** Remove penicillin allergy from patients medical record
Non-severe skin rash alone (maculopapular or benign childhood rash). Usually >24 hours after starting antibiotic **Delayed non-severe allergy**	**Avoid penicillins** **Safe to prescribe cephalosporins*, carbapenems and aztreonam** Consider oral penicillin rechallenge in hospitalised patients
Localised or mild urticarial rash (itchy hives), typically within 2 hours of dose **Immediate non-severe allergy**	**Avoid penicillins** **Safe to prescribe cephalosporins^, carbapenems and aztreonam** Consider referral to an allergy specialist for oral penicillin challenge +/- skin testing
Anaphylaxis, hypotension, collapse, airway and/or tongue swelling, respiratory involvement, widespread urticarial rash (extensive hives all over the body) **Immediate severe allergy**	**Avoid penicillins** In community practice, **avoid all cephalosporins** In hospital practice, **avoid cefalexin and cefaclor** if allergic to amoxicillin or ampicillin. **Other cephalosporins, carbapenems or aztreonam may be prescribed**
Severe Cutaneous Adverse Reactions, i.e. SJS, TEN, AGEP and DRESS OR interstitial nephritis OR severe liver injury **Delayed severe allergy**	**Avoid penicillins AND cephalosporins** **Seek specialist allergy advice before prescribing aztreonam or carbapenems, or use non beta-lactam antibiotics**

*Consider avoiding cefalexin and cefaclor if allergic to amoxicillin or ampicillin

^Avoid cefalexin and cefaclor if allergic to amoxicillin or ampicillin