

Patient information

Drug Allergy

Drug	Date of reaction	Description of reaction	Other related medicines I should avoid?

Why have I been given this leaflet?

You have been given this leaflet as we think that you have experienced an allergy to a medicine while you have been in our care.

What is an Allergy?

An allergy is a reaction the body has to a particular food or substance. Allergies are very common. They're thought to affect more than one in four people in the UK at some point in their lives.

What causes allergies?

Allergies occur when the body's immune system reacts to a particular substance as though it's harmful. It's not clear why this happens.

Symptoms of an allergic reaction

Allergic reactions usually happen quickly within a few minutes of exposure to an allergen. They can cause:

- sneezing
- a runny or blocked nose
- red, itchy, watery eyes
- wheezing and coughing
- a red, itchy rash
- worsening of [asthma](#) or [eczema](#) symptoms

Most allergic reactions are mild, but occasionally a severe or life threatening reaction may occur with symptoms like breathing difficulties, wheezing, fast heartbeat, feeling faint or collapse ([anaphylaxis](#) or anaphylactic shock). This is a medical emergency and needs urgent treatment. If your allergy is particularly severe or it's not clear what you're allergic to, your GP may refer you to an allergy specialist for testing and advice about treatment

How to manage an allergy?

In many cases, the most effective way of managing an allergy is to avoid the allergen that causes the reaction whenever possible.

You will need to tell healthcare professionals (nurses, doctors, dentists, pharmacists) that you have an allergy so they can avoid prescribing, administering or providing the medicine you are allergic to or similar medicines.

What causes allergies?

Allergies occur when the body's immune system reacts to a particular substance as though it's harmful. It's not clear why this happens.

Is it an allergy, sensitivity or intolerance?

Allergy – a reaction produced by the body's immune system when exposed to a normally harmless substance

Sensitivity – the exaggeration of the normal effects of a substance; for example, the caffeine in a cup of coffee may cause extreme symptoms, such as palpitations and trembling

Intolerance – where a substance causes unpleasant symptoms, such as diarrhea or indigestion, but doesn't involve the immune system.

Sources of information

Further information about allergies can be obtained from:

- Medicines Information Conquest Hospital 01424 757067
- Medicines Information Eastbourne DGH 01323 413785
- Pharmacy Department, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
- NHS 111
- Your GP
- Your Local Pharmacy

Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department. Tel:

Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Dr J Wilkinson, Associate Medical Director

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:

Medicines Optimisation Group

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Responsible clinician/author: Jane Starr, Medication Safety Officer

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