

## Mayo Clinic Minute: Are you allergic to penicillin or not?

Penicillin belongs to a group of antibiotics used by healthcare professionals to combat a wide array of bacterial infections, including strep throat, ear infections and pneumonia. Penicillin, one of the most widely prescribed antibiotics, is also one of the most frequently reported medication allergies.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 10% of people living in the U.S. report having a [penicillin allergy](#). However, less than 1% are truly allergic.

[Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse](#), a pediatric infectious diseases physician with the [Mayo Clinic Children's Center](#), says if your healthcare team can't prescribe the preferred antibiotic for your bacterial infection due to a listed allergy, it can pose additional risks to your health.

Video	Audio
	Penicillin is one of the most prescribed antibiotics for bacterial infections.
Nipunie Rajapakse, M.D. Pediatric Infectious Disease Mayo Clinic	"And the best treatments for things like strep throat, ear infections, pneumonia are penicillin or another antibiotic in that same family."
	Dr. Nipunie Rajapakse says if your medical chart indicates a penicillin allergy, your healthcare team needs to look for other options.
	"We know that these other antibiotics are often not as effective as a penicillin. So that means you might not get better."
	And they can be harder on your system. She says people often misinterpret side effects of the medication as symptoms of an allergy.
	"Symptoms of a true antibiotic allergy are things like a hives, rash, so usually a very itchy kind of raised rash that can develop."
	Dr. Rajapakse says 50% of people will outgrow the allergy within five years.
	"Even if you did have a reaction in the past, it's important to discuss this with your primary care provider. And if it's been enough years out, you may be eligible for testing and to have that allergy removed from your chart."
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Jason Howland.

