

What is drug allergy?

Drug allergy occurs when the immune system over-reacts to a medicine and produces an allergic reaction.

What are the symptoms of drug allergy?

Mild allergy: hives, itchy rash or localized swellings.

Moderate allergy: symptoms (e.g. rash, itchiness) that spread to or involve the whole body, swellings around the eyes, lips.

Severe allergy (Anaphylaxis): Rare but can be lethal. Symptoms generally appear within seconds or minutes after exposure to the medication and may include wheezing, chest tightness, difficulty in breathing, rash/swellings that affect more than one part of the body; vomiting, diarrhoea, fainting and etc. In this case, immediate medical attention is required.

Allergic reaction may occur from few minutes to several days after taking the medication, and the reaction may last from few minutes to hours depends on the dose and severity of reaction. The risk of having drug allergy and the severity of reaction depends on several factors such as genetics, gender, age, medical conditions, past history of drug allergies, and etc. The risk and severity is varied in different individuals.

You should inform your doctor or pharmacist if you have any drug allergy history. You are recommended to keep a record of the name of drugs that you were allergic to and the type and severity of response you experienced to facilitate diagnosing and prescribing by your doctor.

This guidance is for reference only .

You should always follow your doctor's instructions.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.

Do not share your medications with other people.

如有任何查詢，歡迎聯絡我們
For enquiry, please feel free to contact us

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Ref. No: PHAR-02

Ver.4 Updated: 04/2022



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General advice for taking your oral medications

藥劑部
Pharmacy



Storage of medications

- Store medications in a cool dry place. Some medications require refrigeration.
- Medications should be kept away from children to avoid accidental swallowing.
- Medications should be stored in their original container.
- Each container should be used to store one medication only.
- Oral medications should be stored separately from external medications such as creams, eye drops, nasal sprays and etc.

Do not take medications that have not been stored properly

- Expired medications.
- Quality of medications (colouration, taste, scent, clarity) has changed.
- Eye drops or eye ointments that are opened longer than manufacturer recommendation.
- Medications without instruction and legible labels.

Disposal of medications

If you have large quantities of expired medications or medications that you no longer need, return them to any nearby hospital pharmacy.

Taking your medications

1. Wash hands before and after taking your medication.
2. Follow the instruction of your doctor and do not change the dosage by yourself.
3. Do not share your medications with other people.
4. Tell your doctor/ other healthcare professionals if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or have any drug/ food allergies.
5. Tell your doctor/ other healthcare professionals about your past medical history and current medication profile.
6. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If the next dose is due in less than half of the dosing interval, skip the dose and take your next dose as scheduled. Do not double the dose to make up for the forgotten one.

Take your medicines with water

Q: Why should we take medicines with water?

A: Water does not contain substances that can affect the absorption of medicines.

Q: What about other beverages?

A: Milk contains Magnesium and Calcium, which may bind to certain medicines and reduce their absorption and effectiveness.

Tea and coffee contain caffeine, which may increase your blood pressure if you are also taking cold/flu medicines that contain decongestants. Chemicals in tea may increase/decrease the effects of certain medications.

Alcohol may increase the effect of certain medicines, e.g. drowsiness. It may also affect the efficacy of certain anti-diabetic medications.

Some fizzy drinks and fruit juices may contain alpha hydroxy acids, which may affect the absorption and effectiveness of certain medications.

Pregnancy, breastfeeding and medications

Seek advice from your doctor if you are pregnant and require drug treatment. Your doctor will choose the most suitable medication(s) based on your condition, and weigh the benefits and risks associated with the treatment.

Different drugs have different effects on the developing foetus. Some medications are safe to take throughout the whole pregnancy, while others may only be safe to take in a particular trimester. There are medications that should be completely avoided in any stage of the pregnancy. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any medications.

Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are breastfeeding since not all medications are suitable during this period. Most of oral medications achieve highest blood and milk concentration 1 to 3 hours after ingestion and the drug concentration then gradually declines. Therefore nursing mother can take the medication right after breastfeed or right before the child take his/her longest sleep. In this way, infants will expose to the lowest amount of medication.