

Allergies

Some people can be allergic to antibiotics, particularly penicillin and similar antibiotics such as cephalosporins.

Signs of an allergic reaction include rash, swelling of the face and tongue and difficulty breathing when you take antibiotics. This is called an anaphylactic reaction and can be serious or even fatal. Sometimes it can occur even if you have been prescribed the same antibiotics in the past and did not experience these symptoms.

Always tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have had an allergic reaction to any antibiotic and remind them of your allergy before you receive any antibiotics. Seek immediate medical advice if symptoms of an allergy occur after taking any antibiotics.

If you would like additional information on your prescribed antibiotic, please visit <https://www.nps.org.au/medicine-finder> and search your prescribed medication. This website contains Consumer Medicine Information (CMI), designed to inform you about your prescribed medicine. Read the CMI to ensure you get the best and safest use of your medicine.

For further medication information contact NPS Medicines Line
Phone: 1300 633 424 (9am -5pm AEST)



Information for Patients Commencing New Antibiotics following Surgery

This leaflet answers some common questions about antibiotics. It is important that you follow these instructions correctly so that the antibiotic prescribed for you can work to prevent infection after surgery.

What is an antibiotic?

Antibiotics are prescription medications used to treat or prevent infections caused by bacteria.

Antibiotic Use

Not taking your antibiotic in the way it was prescribed can lead to failure of the treatment and development of resistance to standard antibiotic treatment. It is important to always finish the full course of antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor.

Prophylaxis

If you are having an operation, you may be given antibiotics to prevent an infection. This is known as surgical prophylaxis.

How to take your antibiotic

Antibiotics can be taken by mouth, but can also be applied to the affected part of the body such as the eyes or on the skin as drops or ointment (also known as topical).

Some antibiotics should be taken with food, whilst others are best taken on an empty stomach. Please read the label on the medication for these instructions.

Always follow the directions on the label. The label on your medication will specify how much of the medication to take, how many times a day to take, use or apply the medicine and how long to use the medicine for.

Please read your medications packaging for correct storage directions.

Antibiotic use can cause bacteria to become resistant to antibiotic treatments if not used correctly, therefore, it is important to finish the full course and take the correct dose at the right time in order to kill all the bacteria that are causing the infection.

Do not give your antibiotics to friends, family or pets and do not keep leftover antibiotics. If you have received more doses than you were prescribed, ask a pharmacist about how to dispose of the remaining medicines.

Special Care

You should speak to your doctor before taking an antibiotic if you know you have any liver or kidney problems.

Inform your doctor or pharmacist if you are pregnant or breastfeeding before taking any antibiotics.

Side effects

All medicines can have side effects. Sometimes they are serious, most of the time they are not. If while undergoing treatment with an antibiotic you experience any side effects or symptoms which may be due to the medication you were prescribed, please inform your doctor or pharmacist.

The most common side effects of oral antibiotics are diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting and thrush. The most common side effects of antibiotic eye drops/ointments are eye irritation, itching, burning and stinging.

Often you will get no obvious side effects from antibiotics, however if your symptoms persist, contact your doctor.

Review Plan

You will be required to attend a post-operative appointment with your doctor. Please ensure you attend this appointment as your treatment will be reviewed. This appointment will also give you an opportunity to ask any additional questions about your antibiotic treatment.