

ADVERSE EFFECTS OF ANTIBIOTICS

Antibiotics are the most effective medication we have to treat serious and life-threatening bacterial infections. Although they are commonly our first line of treatment for bacterial infections, antibiotics themselves can cause serious and life threatening adverse effects in people.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What is an Adverse Effect of an Antibiotic?*

Many types of adverse effects exist but the two most common are:

1. The antibiotic may cause an allergic reaction
2. The antibiotic may cause an overgrowth of harmful bacteria in your digestive tract

2. *What are the signs of an Adverse Effect of an Antibiotic?*

The signs of an **allergic reaction** usually develop immediately or within a few days of starting a course of antibiotics and may include:

- A skin reaction such as hives, rashes, itching or redness
- Difficulty breathing such as wheezing or a shortness of breath
- Digestive problems such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or abdominal cramps

The signs of a **harmful bacterial overgrowth** in your digestive tract may occur within a few days of starting a course of antibiotics or may not appear for up to 2 months after finishing the antibiotics and may include:

- Abdominal pain/cramping
- Diarrhea
- Bloody stools
- Fever

The most serious form of this condition is called pseudomembranous colitis and, although it may occur with a number of antibiotics, it is most strongly linked to Clindamycin.

3. *Who is at high risk for an Adverse Effect of an Antibiotic?*

Anyone, regardless of age, race or gender, may experience an adverse effect from an antibiotic.

The history of an adverse effect causes you to be at higher risk for a similar or more severe reaction in the future. Also, those people with a family history of adverse effects and those with certain medical conditions or taking certain medications are at higher risk.

4. *What can I do to minimize my risk of an Adverse Effect of an Antibiotic?*

If you have an adverse effect, be sure to discontinue the antibiotic and call your prescribing doctor **immediately**.

While taking your antibiotic, and for the three weeks following the completion of your course, be sure to repopulate your digestive system with “good” bacteria by doing the following:

- Take a daily high-quality probiotic supplement designed for antibiotic-related gastrointestinal distress; a good choice is a general probiotic blend with **3-5 billion CFU of *S.boulardii***.

***To gain the most benefit from your probiotic,
make sure you do not take it within two hours of taking your antibiotic.***