

700 Children's Drive
Columbus, Ohio 43205-2696
nationwidechildrens.org

ALLERGY TO MEDICINES

An allergic reaction to a medicine, or *medicine allergy*, can occur in anyone. This is an unwanted reaction that can have many symptoms. There are two main types: *urticaria* (hives) and *anaphylaxis*. Medicine allergies are not the same thing as side effects of a medicine. Always call or visit your child's doctor if you think something is an allergic reaction.

URTICARIA (ur ti CARE e uh)

One type of medicine allergy is urticaria (hives or a rash). These are raised, red, and itchy areas of the skin. The number, color, and shape of the hives can vary. They can appear on any part of the body, but they are mostly found on the arms, legs, and main part of the body. Sometimes they are also on the hands and feet. Hives and rashes are caused by the release of *histamine* (HISS tuh meen). Histamine is a chemical that is released into the body from cells in the skin. It causes irritation, itching, and redness.

What to do: Hives and rashes do not always need to be treated. In most cases they go away on their own. You can do some things, though, to ease the itching and to keep the hives or rash from spreading. See page 2, TIPS TO HELP WITH ITCHING.

ANAPHYLAXIS (an uh ful LAK sis)

Another less common allergic reaction is anaphylaxis or an anaphylactic (an uh fal LAK tic) reaction. **It is a severe reaction where your child's throat, mouth, and tongue swell. The swelling can be enough to cause wheezing, coughing, and trouble breathing.** With this reaction, your child's body thinks the medicine will hurt it. When this happens, your child's body attacks the medicine and causes these symptoms.

Anaphylaxis should always be treated as an emergency. Call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency room. Often your child will need other medicines to make the symptoms go away. Some of these medicines open the airways and help your child breathe better. Some children need help breathing until the medicine is out of their body and the child is not in danger anymore.

MEDICINES THAT MAY CAUSE ALLERGIES

Any medicine can cause an allergic reaction, but these are the more common ones:

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|-----------------------|------------------|---------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Amoxicillin | Allopurinol | Aspirin | Novocaine | Iodine |
| Penicillin | Ibuprofen or | | Anti-arrhythmia medicines | Insulin |
| Bactrim®/Septra® | Motrin®/Advil® | | Anti-seizure medicines | Muscle relaxers |
| Other sulfa medicines | Naproxen or | | Blood pressure medicines | Vaccines/shots |
| Other antibiotics | Naprosyn®/Aleve® | | Blood products | |
| Anesthesia | Codeine | | Dyes for X-ray procedures | |
| | Morphine | | | |

TIPS TO HELP WITH ITCHING

Bathing and grooming: To get rid of the itching, the doctor may tell you to have your child soak in a warm bath.

- Hot water and soap cause dry skin. When giving a bath, use lukewarm water. Perfumed soaps or deodorants should not be used. Avoid using too much soap. Your child's doctor may suggest a specific type of soap or skin cleanser, such as Dove Unscented, Basis, or Cetaphil.
- Put moisturizer on the skin about five minutes after bathing. Check with your doctor for the type to use.
- Keep your child's fingernails and toenails clean and cut short to keep the child from scratching and causing infections



Picture 1 Soaking in a warm bath may help with itching.

Clothing: Wearing long sleeves, long pants, or one-piece outfits will help keep your child from scratching exposed skin.

- Heat, high humidity, and sweating will increase the itching. Avoid over-dressing your child, especially during cold weather.
- Wash all clothes and bed linens in a **mild** detergent. Rinse twice to remove detergent.

Other ideas:

- Give your child smooth, washable toys and smooth, rather than furry, stuffed animals.
- Apply a cool compress. (Dampen a soft cloth with cool water and hold it on the skin.)
- Benadryl®, or an antihistamine, can be used to reduce the swelling and itching. Ask your child's doctor or pharmacist for the right dose for your child.

IF YOUR CHILD HAS AN ALLERGIC REACTION

If your child has an allergic reaction with hives or a rash, call your child's doctor. The doctor may want to see your child. You may be told to continue the medicine if it is only going to be taken for a few more days. The doctor may switch the medicine to avoid making the hives or rash worse. Or, the doctor may stop the medicine.

Remember: If your child has an anaphylactic reaction to a medicine, you should call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest emergency room. This is a serious reaction and needs care from a doctor right away. Your child should wear a medical ID bracelet that says the name of the medicine that causes the reaction.

- If your child has had an allergic reaction to a medicine, be sure to write it down. This record can be kept with your child's medical card or shot records. Any doctor, dentist, or pharmacist that treats your child should know about allergic reactions to medicines.
- Your child should avoid any medicine that has caused an allergic reaction in the past. Be sure to read the labels of all medicines. Even over-the-counter products may contain a medicine that causes an allergic reaction in your child.

If you have questions, contact your child's doctor or pharmacist.