

Allergies to Medications

Allergic reactions to medications can be mild or serious. In a very few instances, they can even be life-threatening. The allergic reaction may show itself as a skin rash, itching, hives, swelling around the lips, tongue, or face, swollen and aching joints, wheezing, or difficulty breathing. Allergies to medications are different from unpleasant drug side-effects, which tend to be more predictable.

Almost any medication can cause an allergic reaction. Furthermore, a person can take a medication for several years with no ill effects and then become allergic to it. Some of the medications that cause allergic reactions are penicillin, sulfa, aspirin, phenobarbital, laxatives, and codeine.

It's important to tell your medical professional about any medications you know you're allergic to, so that he or she can enter this into your medical record. Also, remind every doctor or nurse about your allergy before receiving an injection or medication. If you're worried that you might be allergic to an injection—but you're not sure—you might want to stay in your doctor's waiting area for 20 minutes after getting the injection.

In addition, it's a good idea to keep a list of your allergies with you all the time, in your purse or wallet, or on a Medic-Alert wrist bracelet. If you're ever in an accident or become unconscious, this will serve as a warning to those who are taking care of you.

If you suspect you're having a severe allergic reaction to a medication, immediately go to the Emergency Room. If you think you're having a mild reaction to a medication, call your medical professional. In either case, stop taking the medication.

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For more health information ...

- Connect to our Web site at *members.kp.org*
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone at 1-800-332-7563. For TTY, call 1-800-777-9059.
- Visit your facility's Health Education Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.

If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.

If you have an emergency medical condition, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital. When you have an emergency medical condition, we cover emergency care from Plan providers and non-Plan providers anywhere in the world.

An emergency medical condition is (1) a medical or psychiatric condition that manifests itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity (including severe pain) such that you could reasonably expect the absence of immediate medical attention to result in serious jeopardy to your health or serious impairment or dysfunction of your bodily functions or organs; or, (2) when you are in active labor and there isn't enough time for safe transfer to a Plan hospital before delivery, or if transfer poses a threat to your or your unborn child's health and safety.