

## Topic of the month:

## Reactions to Medicine



### Medication Allergy Or Side Effect?

**Medication allergy** is different from side effect. It is important to understand the difference between the two because drug allergies can be serious and are handled differently.

	Allergy	Side Effect
<b>What is it?</b>	An allergy is a reaction caused by your immune system. It could be serious and require immediate medical attention.	A side effect is an unpleasant but often predictable reaction that occurs when a medication is used correctly. Steps can be taken to prevent these side effects.
<b>What are its symptoms?</b>	1. Mild: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rash</li> </ul> 2. Severe: Also called Anaphylaxis. Very serious and can cause harm or death: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swelling of lips, face and tongue</li> <li>• Choking, tightening of throat</li> <li>• Difficulty breathing</li> </ul>	Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Diarrhea</li> <li>• Constipation</li> <li>• Sleepiness</li> <li>• Headache</li> <li>• Muscle aches</li> <li>• Difficulty sleeping</li> <li>• Lack of energy</li> </ul>
<b>How can I manage them?</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Inform</b> your healthcare providers of your medication allergies.</li> <li><b>2. Remind</b> your prescriber and pharmacist with your allergies before starting a new medication.</li> <li><b>3. Wear</b> a medical alert bracelet or necklace if you have a serious allergy. Ask your doctor if you should carry an epinephrine auto-injector.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Talk</b> to your pharmacist before starting a new medication.</li> <li><b>2. Read</b> the drug information sheet provided with your new prescribed medication</li> <li><b>3. Ask</b> your pharmacist for ways to prevent/reduce side effects from your medicine</li> </ol>

**!** **If you react to a medication**, write down the name of the medication and what happened (e.g. rash, trouble breathing, nausea, etc). Inform your health care provider of the type of reaction to confirm whether it's an allergy or side effect.

References: <http://www.consumermedsafety.org/> , <https://www.safemedicationuse.ca/> accessed March 16 2018