

# 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.bouardii***.

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