

Adverse Drug Reactions and Allergies

An important aspect of Quality Use of Medicines is to ensure that residents do not receive a medicine to which they have previously experienced a serious reaction. Obtaining reliable information can be challenging at times especially in regard to the cause and type of reaction experienced. It is also important to ensure that all health practitioners in the health care process have the same information.

So what is the difference between an adverse drug reaction and an allergy?

Adverse Drug Event	Harm that occurs while a patient is taking a drug, irrespective of whether the drug is suspected to be the cause. Includes medication errors, adverse effects, toxicity.
Adverse Drug reaction	Overarching term to describe an undesirable or excessive effect of a drug and may also be referred to as a side effect or intolerance .
Allergy	Adverse reaction to a drug or substance due to an immunological response. These can be life threatening, such as anaphylaxis or more minor in nature such as rash and itch. The onset of an allergic reaction may also be less clearly related to initiation of the drug, and can be delayed. Allergy to one drug may also result in cross-reactivity to other structurally related drugs. A previously mild allergy may become life threatening on re-exposure and it should be noted that prior tolerance to a drug does not mean that an allergic reaction to the same drug will not occur in the future.
Pseudo-allergy	A reaction with the same clinical manifestations as an allergic reaction (eg, as a result of histamine release) but lacking immunological specificity
Intolerance	A lowered threshold to the normal pharmacological actions of a drug/substance. It is a poorly defined term.
Side Effect	An undesirable response to a drug that occurs when used at normal doses
Toxicity	An adverse reaction due to a high dose/exposure or a serious adverse reaction
Idiosyncratic	An unpredictable reaction to a drug that is peculiar to an individual and is not dose related

Examples of adverse drug reactions

Drug	Allergy	Side effect	Toxicity
Perindopril (Coversyl)	Rash	Cough, hypotension	Hypotension, arrhythmia, vomiting
Opioids	Anaphylaxis	Constipation, hallucinations	Respiratory depression
Amitriptyline (Enderp)	Rash	Dry mouth, postural hypotension	Arrhythmia, seizures
Amoxicillin (Amoxil)	Rash	Diarrhoea (mild – severe)	Unlikely

Recognising adverse effects and allergies

Sometimes it is difficult to tell if an adverse effect is due to a medicine or to something else or whether it is a new medical condition. Staff should be alert to any changes in the patient's condition which commences after the introduction of a new medication or an increase in dose, as this may indicate an adverse effect.

What should you do?

The appropriate management, if you suspect a resident is experiencing an adverse effect or an allergy from a medication, will depend on the nature and severity of the reaction.

If it is likely to be a side effect that is not causing the resident harm but is bothersome, then contact the doctor or pharmacist to discuss. The doctor may reduce the dose or prescribe an alternative or the pharmacist may advise on ways to minimise the effect.

A resident develops nausea when commenced on an analgesic and the pharmacist advises to make sure the dose is taken with food



If the resident is experiencing a severe or life threatening reaction then the offending medication should be withheld and medical attention should be sought immediately by calling 000.

Full body rash and difficulty breathing when a penicillin antibiotic is administered

The importance of RECORDING

It is very important to ensure that **significant** adverse effects and allergies are recorded in the patient history and on the drug chart to avoid potential harm from re-exposure to the medication in the future.

- Name of substance
 - o Ensure correct spelling to avoid confusion
 - o Be consistent with recording either drug or brand name

- Reaction details and severity
- Date of reaction

Further useful information would include

- Where the information was obtained
- How the reaction was managed

Any events occurring whilst the resident is in the facility should be recorded with details as soon as possible and information provided to the pharmacy and GP for their records.

For new residents entering the facility, every effort should be made to identify any previous drug allergies or significant adverse effects utilizing information from the resident, carer, relatives and previous GPs as appropriate

So what's important?

1. Know the difference between an Adverse Drug Reaction (ADR) and an allergic reaction
2. Investigate and record as much information as possible regarding nature and severity of the reaction
3. Consistency with recording drug name vs brand/trade name, remember spelling is important
4. Ensure that all relevant health care professionals have the same information.
5. Accurate documentation is important to avoid re-exposure to a potentially life threatening medicine but also to ensure that suitable therapy is not avoided unnecessarily in the future.

Allergies & Adverse Drug Reactions (ADR)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	DRUG ALERT LABEL ATTACH ALERT LABEL HERE AND WHERE INDICATED INSIDE CHART
<input type="checkbox"/> Nil Known	
Drug (or other)	Reaction / type / date
Perindopril	Cough 2014 (From previous doctor CMA)
Amoxicillin	Bronchospasm Anaphylaxis 1982 (From previous doctor CMA)
Sign <i>D. Morgan</i>	Print name David Morgan Date 23/04/2018