

SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE DRUG REACTIONS



While medications offer innumerable benefits to human health and wellbeing, they also come with the risk of serious adverse reactions.

Hypersensitivity reaction

An exaggerated immune response to a harmless substance, in this case a medication. The body's effort to defend itself triggers an inflammatory cascade that proves damaging to its own tissues.

Localized allergic reaction

Itching, rash, and hives

Anaphylaxis

Severe and potentially life-threatening, systemic reaction to an allergen:

- Nausea/vomiting
- Swelling to face, mouth, tongue
- Airway constriction, wheezing, difficulty breathing
- Tachycardia
- Hypotension

While any medication could cause an allergic reaction, **antibiotics** are among the the most common triggers.

Angioedema

Allergic reaction causing swelling in deep layers of skin and other tissues. Often affects lips, mouth, tongue. May compromise airway.

Common trigger medications:

ACE Inhibitor and Angiotensin Receptor Blocker blood pressure medications

Red man syndrome

Severe reaction to the antibiotic **Vancomycin**:

- Flushing
- Severe itching
- Hypotension
- Rash
- Tachycardia

Prevention:

Infuse slowly and pre-medicate with antihistamine.

Disulfiram-like reaction

Occurs when a medication other than disulfiram, which is used in treatment of alcohol use disorder, provokes similar symptoms when combined with alcohol:

- Severe flushing
- Abdominal cramping
- Anxiety
- Tachycardia
- Sweating
- Hypotension

Common trigger medications:

Antibiotics (Metronidazole, Bactrim)

Antiprotozoals (Tinidazole)

Sulfonylureas (Chlorpropamide, Glyburide)

Cardiac medications (Isosorbide, Nitroglycerine)

CNS depression

Multiple common drug classes cause CNS depression—either as their intended therapeutic effect, or as a known side effect. Combining two or more of these medications and substances increases the risk of overdose and death.

CNS depressants include:

- Benzodiazepines
- Opioid narcotics
- Barbiturate-like drugs
- Alcohol
- Antihistamines

Symptoms of CNS depression/overdose:

- Altered mental status
- Lethargy
- Reduced respiratory rate
- Bradycardia
- Cold, clammy skin
- Cyanosis



NOTES

