

Improving Surgical Antimicrobial Prophylaxis – the mACCEPT Tool and Frequently Asked Questions

Background

Penicillin allergy is the most commonly reported allergic reaction. [1–7]

Despite a prevalence of 10%, only about 1% of the population is truly allergic to penicillin when tested. Cefazolin allergy is uncommon and because of differences in the side chain compared to other beta-lactams, cross-reactivity is not expected.

In a recent systemic review and meta-analysis of patients with a penicillin allergy, only 0.7% of surgical patients receiving cefazolin reported a reaction. This is equal to or lower than the risk of cefazolin allergy in the general population. Despite this, many surgical patients receive alternative antimicrobials when a penicillin allergy label is in the chart.

The impact of this allergy is significant leading to alternative antimicrobial use (which carries increased odds of developing Surgical Site Infections), longer pre-operative infusion times and higher workload. **The following “frequently asked questions” address some common issues clinicians encounter when assessing suitability for cefazolin-based surgical antimicrobial prophylaxis (SAP).**

Top Five Frequently Asked Questions:

- 1) *What type of allergies or reactions might people have to antimicrobials?*
 - Type 1 hypersensitivity reactions (i.e. anaphylaxis, hives, urticaria)
 - Non-type I hypersensitivity reactions including Stevens-Johnson Syndrome, serum sickness, thrombocytopenia, and anemia.
 - An isolated maculopapular rash is a non-severe, non-type 1 hypersensitivity reaction.
 - Intolerance: non-allergic adverse effects that include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or lack of efficacy.
- 2) *Is cefazolin safe to give to patients who report a beta-lactam allergy?*
 - YES: If **Type 1 hypersensitivity** to other non-cefazolin beta-lactams. The different side-chain of cefazolin make cross-reactivity with other beta-lactam allergies very unlikely and equivalent to the population level risk of beta-lactam allergy.
 - *Note: Approximately 3% of patients who have a **skin test-proven allergy to penicillin** may also react to cefazolin. Further assessment of the risk and benefit of cefazolin in this group of patients may be warranted.*
 - YES: If patients have an **intolerance** to non-cefazolin beta-lactams. Prior intolerance to other non-cefazolin antimicrobials does not increase the chance for a cefazolin-mediated reaction.
 - NO: If patients had a **severe non-type 1 hypersensitivity reaction**, beta-lactams including cefazolin should generally be avoided until formalized allergy assessment has been obtained.

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- 3) *What if my patient is uncertain about the type or severity of the reaction they experienced in the past?*
- Reported beta-lactam allergy without recall of specific details including the need for targeted treatment makes severe allergic reaction unlikely. Cefazolin can safely be used in patients uncertain of the timing, type, or severity of an allergic reaction.
 - Beta-lactam allergy may wane with time. In patients with true Type 1 hypersensitivity reactions, 80% will not react to the same antimicrobial after 10 years[8].
- 4) *What if my patient reports a rash to beta-lactam antibiotics?*
- Mild type 4 hypersensitivity (usually an isolated maculopapular rash) is **not** a contraindication to receiving cefazolin.
 - If desquamating rash and/or rash associated with other systemic symptoms such as fever and/or organ dysfunction, **cefazolin should be avoided**.
- 5) *When is vancomycin prophylaxis indicated in patients undergoing surgery?*
- Vancomycin is still the suggested antimicrobial in cases of patients who:
 - are MRSA positive
 - had a **severe reaction to cefazolin**
 - had a **severe non-type 1 hypersensitivity reaction** to any beta lactam

References and Additional Resources:

- 1 Shenoy ES, Macy E, Rowe T, *et al*. Evaluation and Management of Penicillin Allergy: A Review. *Jama* 2019;**321**:188. doi:10.1001/jama.2018.19283
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- 5 Lam PW, Tarighi P, Elligsen M, *et al*. Self-reported beta-lactam allergy and the risk of surgical site infection: A retrospective cohort study. *Infect Control Hosp Epidemiology* 2020;**41**:438–43. doi:10.1017/ice.2019.374
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- 8 Trubiano JA, Adkinson NF, Phillips EJ. Penicillin Allergy Is Not Necessarily Forever. *Jama* 2017;**318**:82–3. doi:10.1001/jama.2017.6510