



## Aspirin Sensitivity

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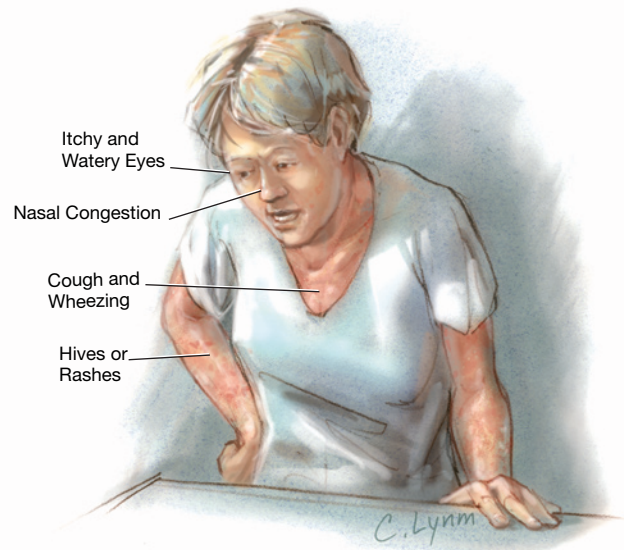
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# Aspirin Sensitivity

**A**spirin sensitivity may cause symptoms similar to allergic reactions in susceptible people. Patients with aspirin sensitivity typically also have asthma and **nasal polyps** (growths in the nose), a combination known as the “aspirin triad.” Aspirin sensitivity can be confirmed in a doctor’s office by performing a challenge test by giving the patient a small dose of aspirin and watching for symptoms of aspirin sensitivity to develop. The December 22/29, 2004, issue of *JAMA* includes an article about aspirin sensitivity with particular regard to use of aspirin in the treatment and prevention of heart disease.



## SYMPTOMS OF ASPIRIN SENSITIVITY

Occurrence of the following symptoms after taking aspirin or another **nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug** (such as ibuprofen, indomethacin, or naproxen) suggests the possibility of aspirin sensitivity:

- Itchy and watery eyes
- Itchy rashes
- Nasal congestion
- Hives
- Worsening asthma
- Rashes around the mouth
- Cough and wheezing
- **Anaphylaxis**—a severe, potentially fatal reaction including hives, difficulty breathing, and a drop in blood pressure; fortunately rare in aspirin sensitivity

## PRECAUTIONS FOR PERSONS WITH ASPIRIN SENSITIVITY

- Avoid aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs
- Avoid drugs with aspirin as an ingredient
- People with aspirin-induced asthma can usually take acetaminophen to relieve pain

Talk to your doctor if you think you may have aspirin sensitivity. Referral to an **allergist** (doctor with special training in allergic diseases) may be helpful.

## TREATMENT

- Many people with aspirin sensitivity can be “desensitized” under close medical supervision so that they can eventually take aspirin safely.
- During the desensitization process, very low doses of aspirin are taken each day, with the doses slowly increasing over time.

Undergoing aspirin desensitization followed by a daily aspirin dose can also improve asthma and slow the rate at which nasal polyps grow in people with the aspirin triad.

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