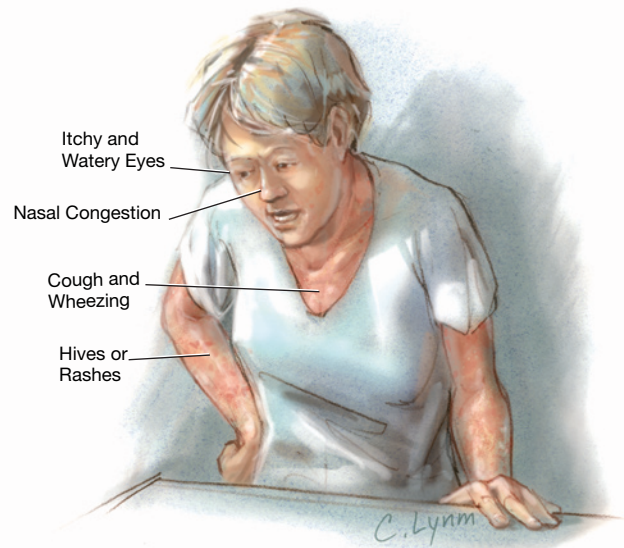


Aspirin Sensitivity

Aspirin 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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