

The Steward

July 2026

Updated Beta-lactam Allergy Policy

Policy #43008 has been updated to guide safe administration of dissimilar side chain cephalosporins in low-risk cephalosporin allergic patients.

- **Low risk definition:**
 - Remote (>10 years) unknown reaction
 - Patient denies allergy but it is on record
 - Self-limited rash or pruritus
 - Urticaria (hives) with no other symptoms (>5 years since reaction)
 - Tolerated structurally dissimilar cephalosporins in the past
- **High risk definition including features of anaphylaxis:**
 - Respiratory symptoms
 - Angioedema/swelling
 - Cardiovascular symptoms (syncope/passing out, arrhythmias)

Provider Tip

- Use allergy risk stratification and side-chain similarity to guide cephalosporin selection in cephalosporin allergy.
- Example: Cefazolin or ceftriaxone can be used safely in a low-risk cephalexin allergy

Nursing Tip

- When documenting beta-lactam allergies, include the exact agent, reaction, severity, and time of onset.
- Document safe receipt of other beta-lactams along with last known date

Pharmacist Tip

- Allergy alerts can be bypassed in low-risk patients upon order verification
- iVent documentation is expected in high-risk patients rechallenges after discussion with providers

PENICILLIN Allergy Rechallenge Guidance

Rechallenge	Allergy risk		Do NOT rechallenge
	Low risk	High risk	
Penicillin	Evaluate eligibility for Amoxicillin PO challenge to de-label allergy	Do not rechallenge	• SJS/TEN • DRESS • Serum sickness • Hemolytic anemia • AIN • DILI
Cephalosporin	May rechallenge with structurally dissimilar side chain (see chart on page 2)		
Carbapenem	May safely rechallenge		
Aztreonam	May safely rechallenge		

CEPHALOSPORIN Allergy Rechallenge Guidance

Rechallenge	Allergy risk		Do NOT rechallenge
	Low risk	High risk	
Penicillin	May rechallenge with structurally dissimilar side chain (see chart on page 2)		• SJS/TEN • DRESS • Serum sickness • Hemolytic anemia • AIN • DILI
Cephalosporin	May rechallenge with structurally dissimilar side chain (see chart on page 2)	Do not rechallenge	
Carbapenem	May safely rechallenge		
Aztreonam	May rechallenge with structurally dissimilar side chain (see chart on page 2)		

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β-lactam Cross-Reactivity Chart: to be used in conjunction with the risk assessment tables on page 1.

Abx Allergy → Abx Ordered ↓	Penicillin	Amoxicillin	Nafcillin	Piperacillin	Cephalexin*	Cefazolin	Cefoxitin	Cefuroxime	Cefdinir	Cefpodoxim	Ceftriaxone	Ceftazidime	Cefepime	Ceftolozane	Ceftaroline	Cefiderocol	Carbapenem	Aztreonam
Penicillin	Black	Red	Red	Red	Red													
Amoxicillin	Red	Black	Red	Red	Red													
Nafcillin	Red	Red	Black	Red														
Piperacillin	Red	Red	Red	Black	Red													
Cephalexin*	Red	Red		Red	Black													
Cefazolin						Black												
Cefoxitin							Black	Red										
Cefuroxime							Red	Black		Red	Red	Red	Red	Red				
Cefdinir									Black									
Cefpodoxime								Red		Black	Red	Red	Red	Red				
Ceftriaxone								Red		Red	Black	Red	Red	Red				
Ceftazidime								Red		Red	Red	Black	Red	Red		Red		Red
Cefepime								Red		Red	Red	Red	Black	Red				
Ceftolozane								Red		Red	Red	Red	Red	Black				
Ceftaroline															Black			
Cefiderocol												Red				Black		Red
Carbapenem																	Black	
Aztreonam												Red				Red		Black

*Note: cefaclor, cefadroxil, cefprozil, and cephalexin share identical side chains.

☐ Structurally dissimilar side chain

☒ Structurally similar or identical side chain

☒ Same drug

The above recommendations are based on available literature and national guidelines.
These are not intended to replace physician clinical judgement based on patient-specific factors

Amoxicillin PO Challenge in Low-Risk Patients

- Amoxicillin PO challenge enables safe penicillin allergy de-labeling
 - In **low-risk** patients, a supervised oral amoxicillin challenge can confirm tolerance and remove inaccurate pcn allergy labels
- PEN-FAST is a tool to help identify low-risk penicillin allergy patients using a validated risk stratification
 - Score 0-2: Low risk (<5% reaction)
 - Score 3-5: Moderate to high risk (20-50% reaction)
- Contact your ID/ASP Pharmacist for more information

PEN-FAST Allergy Risk-Assessment Tool

Criteria	Points
Five years or less since reaction?	2
Anaphylaxis/angioedema? or Severe cutaneous adverse reaction?	2
Treatment required for reaction?	1