

23 Thimerosal – Patient Information

Your T.R.U.E. TEST results indicate that you have a contact allergy to thimerosal. This contact allergy may cause your skin to react when it is exposed to this substance, although it may take several days for the symptoms to appear. Typical symptoms include redness, swelling, itching and fluid-filled blisters.

Thimerosal was commonly used as an antiseptic (such as Merthiolate or Mercurochrome[®]) and preservative in many medicines and vaccines. Over the past few decades, thimerosal has been replaced with other preservatives. Now, thimerosal is rarely included in antiseptics or medications, including merthiolate.

A contact allergy to thimerosal should not affect your ability to be vaccinated because most modern vaccines do not contain thimerosal. Vaccines given to children under the age of 6 are made without thimerosal. A few adult vaccines are still manufactured with thimerosal as a preservative, but thimerosal-free alternatives can usually be found if needed.

Where is thimerosal found?



At work, you may find thimerosal in:

- Fluorescent dyes in metal working industries and forensic laboratories
- Vaccine and pharmaceutical manufacturing



At home, you may find thimerosal in:

- Vaccines and antitoxins
- In some nose, eye, and ear medications (prescription and over-the-counter)
- Antiseptic sprays

How can you avoid thimerosal?

- Only use products that do not list thimerosal or related chemicals on the label, ingredients list or Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS). If there is no information, contact the product manufacturer.
- Tell your physician, pharmacist, dentist and veterinarian that you are allergic to thimerosal. Ask for vaccines and medicines that do not contain thimerosal.
- If you think that you contact thimerosal at work, ask your employer for MSDS or manufacturer information on the product(s). Talk to your employer about using a different product or wearing protective gloves and clothing to reduce skin contact.

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What should you look for and avoid?*

Avoid products that list any of the following names in the ingredients, MSDS or package insert.

- **Thimerosal** or mercuriothiolate; merthiolate; sodium ethylmercurithiosalicylate; sodium 2-(ethylmercurithio)benzoate; mercury, ethyl(2-mercaptobenzoato-S)-, sodium salt; mercury, ((o-carboxyphenyl)thio)ethyl-, sodium salt

What are some products that may contain thimerosal or a related substance?*

- Coly-Mycin® S Otic with neomycin and hydrocortisone
- Ocufen® ophthalmic solution
- Merbromin (also known as dibromohydroxymercurifluorescein or Mercurochrome®)
- Vaccines - Japanese encephalitis (JE-VAX® by BIKEN), tetanus toxoid (by Aventis Pasteur), hepatitis A/hepatitis B combined (Twinrix® by GSK)
- Neo-Synephrine® Nasal Decongestant Spray, Extra Strength
- Poly-Pred® Liquifilm® sterile ophthalmic suspension
- Piroxicam (also known as Feldene®) used in the treatment of arthritis

What are some similar products that do NOT contain thimerosal or a related substance?*

- Cipro® HC Otic suspension
- Afrin® 12 Hour Nasal Spray, Extra Moisturizing
- Neomycin, polymyxin B and hydrocortisone otic generic suspension
- Blephamide® ophthalmic suspension
- Most vaccines recommended for children under 6 years of age - measles, mumps, rubella (german measles), polio, pertussis (whooping cough), diphtheria, tetanus, Haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib), hepatitis B, Varicella (chickenpox) and pneumococcal disease
- Some influenza (flu) vaccines – FluMist® and thimerosal-free Fluzone® (AP)
- Most types of adult vaccines can be found in a thimerosal-free formulation

*For additional information about thimerosal in products, go to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) web site at www.fda.gov. Visit the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research for current information about thimerosal in vaccines (www.fda.gov/cber). These lists are brief and provide just a few examples. They are not comprehensive. Product formulations also change frequently. Read product labels carefully and talk to your doctor if you have questions. These are general guidelines. Talk to your doctor for more specific instructions.