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FAQ

What analgesics can be given to a patient allergic to codeine?

For a patient with a true allergy to codeine, the risk of cross-reactivity with another opioid can be reduced if an analgesic from a different chemical class is used. Chemically, there are three classes of opioid analgesics: phenanthrenes, phenylpiperidine, and phenylheptanones. Morphine and its related opioids, including codeine, are in the phenanthrene class. The mixed agonist-antagonist agents (buprenorphine, nalbuphine, butorphanol, pentazocine, and dezocine) are also included in the phenanthrenes. Use of any of these agents in a patient with a true allergy to codeine may result in an allergic reaction. Meperidine and its related congeners are phenylpiperidines, while methadone and propoxyphene are phenylheptanones. Selecting agents from a different chemical class should minimize the risk of cross-sensitivity. However, it is important to note that use of an opioid from a different chemical class does not eliminate the risk of an allergic reaction. For patients with severe or life-threatening reactions, nonnarcotic analgesics, such as nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents or acetaminophen, should be considered.

| Phenanthrenes | Phenylpiperidines | Phenylheptanones (diphenylheptanes) |
|---------------|-------------------|--|
| Morphine | Meperidine | Methadone |
| Hydromorphone | Fentanyl | Propoxyphene |
| Oxymorphone | Sufentanil | Levomethadyl |
| Levorphanol | Alfentanil | |
| Codeine | | |
| Hydrocodone | | |
| Oxycodone | | |
| Buprenorphine | | |
| Butorphanol | | |
| Nalbuphine | | |
| Pentazocine | | |
| Dezocine | | |

References

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