

New FDA Warning about Fluoroquinolone-Associated Aortic Dissections & Ruptures

On December 20, 2018, the FDA issued a new warning (<https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm628753.htm>) regarding the increased risk of aortic dissection and aneurysm rupture in association with the use of fluoroquinolone (FQ) antibiotics. Common FQs include ciprofloxacin, levofloxacin and moxifloxacin.

Prescribing FQs should be avoided in patients with known aortic aneurysms and those at risk for aortic aneurysms and/or dissection. Risk factors include:

- Elderly patients
- Peripheral atherosclerotic vascular disease
- Hypertension
- Marfan syndrome
- Ehlers-Danlos syndrome

The warning states that FQs should not be used in patients at increased risk unless there are no other treatment options available.

This is the fifth advisory issued regarding fluoroquinolones in the past 10 years. Other warnings:

- **Significant decrease in blood sugar and certain mental health side effects** – July 2018 <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm611032.htm>
- **Disabling side effects of the tendons, muscles, joints, nerves and CNS** – July 2016 <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm511530.htm>
- **Restricting use for certain uncomplicated infections** – May 2016 <https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm500143.htm>
- **Peripheral neuropathy** – August 2013 <http://wayback.archive-it.org/7993/20161022101530/http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm365050.htm>
- **Tendonitis and tendon rupture** – July 2008 <http://wayback.archive-it.org/7993/20161022101528/http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/PostmarketDrugSafetyInformationforPatientsandProviders/ucm126085.htm>

The Fluoroquinolones: Their Shrinking Place in Therapy

While FQs have broad anti-microbial activity that promoted their widespread use, the list of serious and potentially fatal side effects makes identifying alternative treatment options imperative.

Prescribers are obligated to weigh the risks of prescribing FQs for each individual patient as well as evaluating whether alternatives should be used instead. Local NM Antimicrobial Stewardship Programs will be augmenting inpatient decision support with guideline and restriction modifications. For now, the web links below provide interim guidance to decrease FQ use for hospitalized and ambulatory patients. [Please contact your local Antimicrobial Stewardship Program \(ASP\) pharmacist for further guidance.](#)

1. [10 Ways to Reduce Fluoroquinolone Prescribing in the Hospital](#)
2. [10 Ways to Reduce Fluoroquinolone Prescribing in Ambulatory Care](#)