

Warning: Fluoroquinolone Antibiotics May Cause Permanent Nerve Damage

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By Dr. Mercola

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently issued a warning that fluoroquinolone antibiotics, taken by mouth or injection, carry a risk for permanent peripheral neuropathy. The safety announcement states:¹

“The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has required the drug labels and Medication Guides for all fluoroquinolone antibacterial drugs be updated to better describe the serious side effect of peripheral neuropathy.

This serious nerve damage potentially caused by fluoroquinolones may occur soon after these drugs are taken and may be permanent... The topical formulations of fluoroquinolones, applied to the ears or eyes, are not known to be associated with this risk.

Peripheral neuropathy is nerve damage in the arms and/or legs, characterized by “pain, burning, tingling, numbness, weakness, or a change in sensation to light touch, pain or temperature, or sense of body position.”

This is not the first warning FDA has posted about this family of antibacterial drugs. In 2008, they posted a black box warning about severe tendon damage. Now having the additional warning for severe and sometimes-permanent nerve damage, there should be NO question in your mind about the danger of these drugs, and I strongly recommend avoiding them if at all possible.

Just Say “Know”

Fluoroquinolones, a class of synthetic antibacterial drugs, are the only types that directly inhibit bacterial DNA synthesis. Several drugs in this class have been taken off the market due to their deadly adverse effects, but six of them remain FDA-approved for use in the United States:

Ciprofloxacin (Cipro)	Levofloxacin (Levaquin)
Gemifloxacin (Factive)	Moxifloxacin (Avelox)
Norfloxacin (Noroxin)	Ofloxacin (Floxin)

Due to their tremendous health risks, fluoroquinolones should be reserved for treating *serious bacterial infections* that won't respond to any other treatment, when the patient is made fully aware of the potential for serious adverse events. Instead, they're often inappropriately prescribed for mild conditions like sinus, urinary tract and ear infections.

In fact, fluoroquinolones are among the most commonly prescribed antibiotics in the United States. I highly recommend you take pause before filling a prescription for these drugs, especially if you have a “routine infection” that has not been treated by other agents that have a

Story at-a-glance

US FDA recently issued a warning that fluoroquinolone antibiotics, taken by mouth or injection, carry a risk for permanent peripheral neuropathy; Cipro (ciprofloxacin) and Levaquin (levofloxacin) are examples

This is not the first warning issued for this class of antibiotics; in 2008 the FDA issued a black box warning about severe tendon damage and actual tendon ruptures

Two other recent studies found that fluoroquinolones increase your risk for acute liver toxicity (if you're over age 66), and destabilize your blood sugar if you're diabetic

Fluoroquinolones have also been associated with memory loss, psychosis, headaches, depression, anxiety, kidney failure, cardiovascular symptoms, nausea and vomiting, blindness and other health problems

Fluoroquinolones are antibiotics with an attached fluoride molecule, which gives them the ability to penetrate into sensitive tissues like your brain and central nervous system, where they can exert neurotoxic effects

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You should not expose yourself to this degree of risk unnecessarily! The dangerousness of fluoroquinolones definitely warrants some serious discourse with your health care provider about whether they are really necessary, versus safer treatment options.

Fluoridated Pharmaceuticals Can Be Extremely Damaging to Your Nervous System

Fluoroquinolones may be the deadliest antibiotics on the market. Besides nerve damage, they have been associated with damage to other body systems, including your musculoskeletal system, eyes and kidneys. What makes these particular drugs so hazardous?

It has to do with the fact that fluoroquinolones are antibiotics whose potency has been “kicked up” by the addition of a fluoride molecule. Fluoride increases permeability into hard-to-penetrate tissues, such as your brain.

Fluoroquinolones are quinolones with fluoride molecules attached—so they penetrate your blood-brain barrier. This ability to penetrate sensitive tissues is what makes fluoride such a potent neurotoxin, able to get into your brain and damage your central nervous system.

In terms of peripheral neuropathy, the FDA was not exactly quick to take action. Twelve years ago Dr. Jay Cohen documented the following fluoroquinolone-related reactions, and as you can see, nervous system problems topped the list.² Yet it took more than a decade—and many destroyed lives—for the FDA to take action.

Nervous system symptoms occurred in 91 percent of patients taking fluoroquinolones (pain, tingling and numbness, dizziness, malaise, weakness, headaches, anxiety and panic, loss of memory, psychosis)
Musculoskeletal symptoms in 73 percent of patients (tendon ruptures, tendonitis, weakness, joint swelling)
Sensory symptoms in 42 percent of patients (tinnitus, altered visual, olfactory, and auditory function)
Cardiovascular symptoms in 36 percent of patients (tachycardia, shortness of breath, chest pain, palpitations)
Skin reactions in 29 percent of patients (rashes, hair loss, sweating, intolerance to heat or cold)
Gastrointestinal symptoms in 18 percent of patients (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain)

Levaquin, the best-selling antibiotic in 2010, actually faces thousands of lawsuits per year from people who have been seriously harmed by taking it. The serious reactions reported from Levaquin include:³

Retinal detachment, which can cause blindness	Hallucinations	Nausea and diarrhea
Acute kidney failure	Psychotic reactions	Hearing problems
Brain fog	Painful rashes	Disruptions to blood sugar metabolism
Depression	Phototoxicity	Peripheral neuropathy

Fluoroquinolones Destroy Collagen

Animal studies have shown that fluoroquinolones are directly toxic to collagen synthesis and promote collagen degradation.⁴ Fluoride disrupts collagen synthesis, which may be part of the reason that fluoridated pharmaceuticals can damage your muscles, tendons, cartilage, ligaments and other structures.

The fluoroquinolones seem to have an especially detrimental effect on your musculoskeletal system, presumably related to this adverse effect on collagen, which can lead to tendon damage and actual tendon ruptures. This resulted in the FDA's issuing of a black box warning about tendon damage in 2008.⁵ Fluoroquinolones are not the only drugs "suped up" by the addition of a fluoride molecule. Prozac (fluoxetine), Prevacid, Baycol, and Dalmane (flurazepam) are also fluorinated.⁶

Are We Heading for Even MORE FDA Warnings?

Two other recent studies may foreshadow even more warnings about fluoroquinolones, in terms of liver toxicity and greater risks for people with diabetes. Are we nearing the time when these drugs should be yanked off pharmacy shelves altogether, rather than just receiving more warnings on their labels?

- Moxifloxacin and levofloxacin were found to increase the risk for acute liver toxicity in people age 66 and up. The findings were published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* in August 2012. The authors recommended FDA consider regulatory warnings regarding acute liver toxicity.^{7, 8}
- Oral fluoroquinolones cause an increased risk of dysglycemia (high blood sugar or low blood sugar reactions) for those with diabetes, according to a study in the August 14, 2013 issue of *Clinical Infectious Diseases*.⁹

Fluoroquinolone Antibiotic Resistance is Much Greater than Predicted



Fluoroquinolones contribute to the creation of antibiotic-resistant bacteria to a much greater degree than experts predicted, according to a report in *Frontiers of Microbiology*.¹⁰

"Since quinolones are synthetic antibiotics, it was predicted that mutations in target genes would be the only mechanism through which resistance could be acquired, because there will not be quinolone-resistance genes in nature. Contrary to this prediction, a variety of elements ranging from efflux pumps, target-protecting proteins, and even quinolone-modifying enzymes have been shown to contribute to quinolone resistance. The finding of some of these elements in plasmids indicates that quinolone resistance can be transferable..."

Failure to predict the development of quinolone resistance reinforces the need of taking into consideration the wide plasticity of biological systems for future predictions. This plasticity allows pathogens to deal with toxic compounds, including those with a synthetic origin as quinolones."

Not only are these antibiotics overused in people, but also in livestock (cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys) and in our canine and feline companions. Every year in the US, 29 million pounds of antibiotics—more than 70 percent of the total antibiotic production—are fed to livestock for nontherapeutic purposes, such as growth promotion. These antibiotics are passed on to you in the meat and dairy you consume.

Overuse of various antibiotics has been linked to antibiotic resistant infections like methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) and the potentially life-threatening diarrhea caused by *Clostridium difficile* (*C. diff*). According to some research, being given fluoroquinolones is the most important risk factor in developing *Clostridium difficile*-associated diarrhea (CDAD).¹¹

The documentary “[Rise of the Superbugs](#)” details why antibiotic overuse is leading to the emergence of [nightmare bacteria](#) that have developed near-total resistance to today’s antibiotics. Even [gonorrhea](#) and tuberculosis bacteria now have resistant strains. Again, a large part of the problem is that these drugs, which should be reserved for life-threatening infections that cannot otherwise be treated, are being vastly overprescribed. Physicians who prescribe in this manner are essentially trying to kill mosquitos with sticks of dynamite—with collateral damage as described throughout this article.

Fluoroquinolones are thought to be particularly dangerous for children under age 18, adults over 60, and pregnant and nursing women, as well as for people with liver disease, diabetes, or those taking corticosteroids or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). But, they are often prescribed for these groups anyway, without even a passing thought.

What You Can Do

If you believe you have experienced a reaction to one of these antibiotics—or any other drug, for that matter—please report it to MedWatch, the FDA’s safety information and adverse event reporting program. It is vital that they hear from each and every one of you who has experienced an adverse drug reaction. This is a major impetus in getting dangerous drugs removed from the market, and physicians almost never report the reactions themselves so it’s really up to you. MedWatch offers several reporting options:

- Telephone 1-800-FDA-1088
- Fax to 1-800-FDA-0178
- File a report online: [MedWatch Online Voluntary Reporting Form](#)
- Mail a report ([FDA form 3500](#)) in a postage-paid envelope to MedWatch, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Maryland 20852-9787

There have been so many people damaged by fluoroquinolones that victims have banded together in a worldwide network, calling themselves “Floxies.” Quite a few Floxies are in the medical field themselves (or were, before they were poisoned), and are on a mission to help fellow fluoroquinolone poisoning victims, which is how the documentary [Certain Adverse Events](#) came about. If you haven’t already seen this film, I highly recommend it.¹² For more information, you can also visit the following websites (there are many more in addition to these if you search by the term “fluoroquinolone”):

- [Levaquinadversesideeffect.com](#)
- [CertainAdverseEvents.com](#)
- [Fluoroquinolone Antibiotic Toxicity Advocacy Page](#) (Facebook)
- [SurvivingCipro.com](#)
- [MyQuinStory.com](#)

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