



## **Allergy Testing**

Allergy testing requires three visits to complete, each lasting approximately thirty minutes. Skin prick testing is done at the first two appointments while intradermal testing, if required, is completed at the last visit. Environmental control methods necessary to avoid suspected allergens are reviewed with the allergy nurse after the last test. A consultation to review the results, answer questions, and develop a treatment plan with the doctor will be scheduled following the completion of the testing process. Allergy tests to suspected foods may be ordered and require a separate appointment. Intradermal tests are not done with food products. Depending on the availability of appointments and local skin reactions, two weeks are usually required to complete the testing process. Skin prick testing is safe, highly reliable, and proven method to help define suspected allergies.

Please note the following important guidelines necessary to make your (or your child's) allergy tests accurate and safe.

### **Allergy Testing Guidelines**

1. **No antihistamines are to be taken for at least five days prior to allergy testing.** This includes any prescription antihistamine (Claritin, Clarinex, Allegra, Astelin or Zyrtec), as well as non-prescription cold, cough, or allergy medications. This also includes any allergy or antihistamine eye drops, nasal sprays such as Afrin, Drixoral, Neosynephrine, and any decongestant (pseudoephedrine) as well. This may mean that you will be without these medications for three weeks or longer during the testing process.
2. **Do not stop taking your asthma medications, Singulair, or inhaled nasal steroid sprays** such as Rhinocort, Nasonex, Nasacort, Flonase, and others unless you are instructed to do so.
3. **Allergy testing cannot be done if you take a beta-blocker.** Allergy testing cannot be done if you are currently taking a beta-blocker such as Indreal (propranolol, Corgard (nadolol), Blocadrin, Tenormin (atenolol, Toprol, or others. This also includes eye drops for glaucoma such as Timoptic. If you are taking any medications for your heart, high blood pressure, or glaucoma, please let our allergy nurse review these medications and record them in your chart prior to testing.

4. **You must be illness and infection free.** You (or your child) must be free from any acute illness or infection during the testing process. If you are on antibiotics, having any difficulty with your asthma, or are suffering from fever or infection of any kind, please notify our staff and reschedule your appointment as soon as possible. If your asthma is not under excellent control, please cancel your appointment testing and see the doctor.
5. **Take it easy on test day.** Do not engage in strenuous activities or sports for at least one hour before each test and two hours afterwards.

### **Skin Testing**

A skin test which causes localized swelling and redness at the testing site is considered a positive reaction. Our office utilizes the skin prick testing method which is a “gold standard” in measuring positive responses. Intradermal tests are also used to further define suspected allergies when prick tests are negative. A prick test involves a small scratch on the forearm which contains a very small amount of the suspected substance. An Intradermal test involves the injection of a very small amount of antigen(s) in the upper arm. Intradermal tests to specific substances are not done if the skin prick test is initially positive. Rarely, a blood test will be ordered to check for positive reactions. This method is considered by many to be less reliable than skin testing and far more expensive. Blood testing is generally reserved for people with more severe skin rashes which make skin testing impossible.

### **Is it an Allergy?**

Symptoms of sneezing, wheezing, coughing, or itchy watery eyes continuously or during certain seasons strongly suggests an allergy. Skin testing is extremely useful in confirming this relationship and helps to define other allergies which may be difficult to detect. A positive skin test, however, does not necessarily mean that one is allergic to that substance. Some patients will have a positive skin test to things that they are not allergic to. It is always necessary for us to correlate allergy tests with clinical symptoms in order for these tests to be of value.

*When you arrive at our office for testing, please sign in at the front counter and proceed back to the allergy office. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the testing process, please discuss them with our staff. The testing procedure may differ for young children.*