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## ALLERGY SKIN TESTING

### What are allergies?

Our immune system is designed to protect us against harmful things like bacteria, viruses, and parasites. However, sometimes our immune system reacts to other things in the environment. Allergy is the term used to describe the over-reaction of our immune system to something that would otherwise be harmless in our environment. We call the specific particles that we are allergic to *allergens*. Common allergens include pollens from trees, grasses, and weeds. These allergens naturally increase during certain times of the year. Other common allergens include dust mite, cockroach, fungi, and animal dander. It is our body's reaction to these things that causes the common allergy symptoms of sneezing, itchy nose and eyes, runny nose, and congestion. Allergies are also known to cause asthma symptoms to worsen.

### How does allergy testing work?

If you have some of these symptoms then your doctor may want to perform allergy skin testing to determine your specific allergens. Allergy skin testing can be performed by one of several methods. In prick testing a device with multiple small plastic points is placed in different allergen extracts and then used to prick the skin. This will deposit a tiny amount of the extract in the superficial layer of the skin. The skin will react by forming a small raised area of swelling at the prick site if you are allergic to that particular allergen. Prick testing is often done as the initial allergy skin test.

Another way to perform skin testing is by using a small needle and syringe to inject a tiny amount of allergen extract into the superficial layers of the skin. This is similar to a TB test. The skin will react in a similar manner if you are allergic to that particular allergen. We typically do prick testing first, followed by intradermal testing for selected allergens.

### What are the benefits of allergy skin testing?

Testing in this manner will enable you and your doctor to determine if you have inhalant allergies and will also reveal which allergens cause reactions for you. This will help guide your treatment.

### What are the risks of allergy skin testing?

Allergy skin testing is very common and is considered to be quite safe. If you are allergic you may have some localized swelling, redness, and itching. More severe reactions such as life-threatening anaphylaxis are possible but they are very rare. If you have ever had a severe allergic reaction during allergy skin testing then you should not have any more skin testing. A blood test can be used instead. If you have asthma and currently are having bad



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symptoms related to your asthma, then it is not a good time to do allergy skin testing. Likewise, if you have significant cardiovascular disease, such as poorly controlled blood pressure or heart disease, you should not have allergy skin testing. Please discuss this with your ENT doctor prior to testing.

**The following medications interfere with allergy testing and can increase the risk of serious allergic reactions:**

**Metoprolol (Toprol)  
Propranolol (Inderal)  
Atenolol (Tenormin)  
Carvedilol (Coreg)  
Labetalol (Trandate)  
Sotalol (Betapace)  
Alprenolol  
Bucindolol  
Carteolol  
Nadolol (Corgard)  
Oxprenolol  
Pindolol  
Timolol eye drops (Timoptic)  
Timolol (Blocadren, Timolide)  
Acebutolol (Sectral, Prent)  
Betaxolol  
Bisoprolol (Zebeta)  
Celiprolol  
Esmolol  
Nebivolol (Bystolic)**

**You should not have allergy skin testing if you take any of the above medications. It is possible that you may be able to switch to a different class of medication that does not interfere with allergy skin testing. You can discuss this with your ENT doctor.**



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**The following medications interfere with allergy skin testing by blocking the allergic response:**

**Antihistamines:**

Benadryl (Diphenhydramine)  
Dramamine (Dimenhydrinate)  
Claritin (Loratadine)  
Clarinex (Desloratadine)  
Zyrtec (Cetirizine)  
Xyzal (Levo-Cetirizine)  
Allegra (Fexofenadine)  
Chlorpheniramine  
Brompheniramine  
Patanase Nasal Spray  
Azelastine (Astepro) Nasal Spray  
Zantac (Ranitidine)

**Steroids:**

Prednisone  
Prednisolone  
Orapred  
Medrol

Please note that certain psychiatric and sedative drugs may interfere with testing as well. Please be sure that your ENT doctor has an accurate, up-to-date list of your current medications.

**Before allergy testing:**

**You must stop all antihistamines (see above list) 5 days prior to testing. If you cannot stop your antihistamines because of the severity of the allergy symptoms, please call us before your appointment so that we can do an alternative form of testing.**

**On the day of your testing, wear short a sleeve shirt and comfortable clothing. The testing takes about one hour and your physician will discuss your test results and any other data immediately afterwards in a consultation.**