

SKIN ALLERGY TESTING

What is allergic rhinitis?

Allergic rhinitis are nasal symptoms due to your immune system overreacting to harmless substances in the environment. Substances that cause these reactions are called allergens.

Why should you have allergy testing?

Allergy testing can help determine if your nasal symptoms are actually due to allergies. Your symptoms could be due to other causes including a nasal septum deviation or chronic sinusitis. If your symptoms are due to allergies, testing can identify the offending triggers and help with avoidance measures. Test results can also influence medication choices and assist in deciding on the potential benefit of immunotherapy (allergy shots).

What allergens will be included in the test?

Skin testing is primarily done for inhalants including tree pollens, grass pollens, weed pollens, dust mites, animal dander and molds. Testing for foods is not routinely done by most of our providers.

How is skin allergy testing done?

Prick testing is performed first. A small, disposable plastic device pricks your skin and puts a small amount of dilute allergen just below the skin surface. If you are allergic, localized swelling similar to a mosquito bite will occur within 20 minutes. If no reaction occurs, an intradermal test is done. The same dilute allergen is injected below the skin surface with a small, thin needle and observed for a reaction after 10 minutes. Prick testing is usually done on the forearm and intradermal tests on the upper arm.

What are the risks and alternatives to skin allergy testing?

You can have large local reactions to the testing. Systemic (whole body) reactions are possible but rare. An alternative to skin testing is blood testing; however, those results are not as immediate and are usually less sensitive.

When is skin allergy testing not allowed?

You cannot have skin testing if you are on a beta-blocker pill or eye drop. Pregnant women are not allowed to have skin testing. Skin testing is stopped if the "control" substances do not have the proper response.

What can you expect from skin allergy testing?

Most patients indicate that it is not painful. You will experience increased swelling and itching at the injection site if you are allergic. You should anticipate the whole process taking 1.5 hours. The testing takes approximately 1 hour and observation afterwards for any worrisome reactions lasts an additional 30 minutes.

How should you prepare for skin allergy testing?

- You should wear a short-sleeved or sleeveless shirt to allow room for the tests.
- Do not apply any lotions to your arms that day.
- Eat as you normally would.
- Avoid exercising 3 hours before and after testing.
- Inform us of any change in medications, new illness, or asthma flare-up.
- The medications you need to avoid before the testing are listed on the next page.



MEDICATIONS TO STOP

ANTI-HISTAMINES

Antihistamines are pills commonly used for allergies.

Stop all antihistamines for at least **5 days prior** to skin testing.

- Brompheniramine (Dimetapp)
- Cetirizine (Zyrtec)
- Chlorpheniramine (Chlor-Trimeton, Coricidin)
- Clemastine (Tavist, Contact)
- Cyproheptadine (Periactin)
- Desloratadine (Clarinex)
- Dimenhydrinate (Dramamine)
- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl, ZzzQuil, Sominex, Tylenol PM)
- Doxylamine (NyQuil, Unisom)
- Fexofenadine (Allegra)
- Hydroxyzine (Atarax)
- Levocetirizine (Xyzal)
- Loratadine (Claritin)
- Promethazine (Phenergan)

NASAL SPRAYS

The following nasal sprays should be stopped at least **5 days prior** to testing:

- Azelastine (Astelin, Astepro, Dymista)
- Olopatadine (Patanase)

Other nasal sprays, including nasal steroid sprays, can be continued prior to testing:

- Beclomethasone (Qnasl)
- Budesonide (Rhinocort)
- Fluticasone (Flonase, Xhance)
- Ipratropium (Atrovent)
- Mometasone (Nasonex)
- Triamcinolone (Nasacort)

H2 BLOCKERS

Certain stomach acid medications are a type of antihistamine.

Stop these medications **2 days prior** to skin testing:

- Cimetidine (Tagamet)
- Famotidine (Pepcid)
- Nizatidine (Axid)
- Ranitidine (Zantac)

HERBAL PRODUCTS

Herbal products can affect skin testing.

Please stop **ALL** herbal products at least **5 days prior** to testing.

DO NOT STOP TAKING YOUR ASTHMA MEDICATIONS.

If you have any questions, please call the office at 704.295.3000.