

Allergy Skin Tests

Allergy skin tests help us find out if you have specific allergic IgE-antibody proteins to allergy eliciting substances known as allergens. The allergens could be pollen, animal dander, mold, food or medications. The tests could be done by two methods: prick and intradermal methods. Each procedure takes about 30 minutes to complete. Neither technique causes significant pain or discomfort and need not be avoided for this reason. In the prick method, your skin on the back or forearm is pricked with a plastic device whose tip is saturated with the test allergen. This causes a small break in the skin and introduces the allergen into the skin. If allergic IgE-antibody proteins to the allergen are present in the test area, it results in red wheal and flare reaction at the test site in 15-20 minutes. In general the larger the size of the wheal and flare the larger the amount of IgE-antibody present. The wheal and flare response will be absent in the absence of specific IgE-antibody. Up to 60 allergens can be tested simultaneously in this manner on your back.



Unlike allergy blood tests, allergy skin tests are simple, safe and cost-effective way of finding out presence or absence of specific IgE-antibody to allergens. However the blood tests are preferable if you have extensive skin disease, are a woman and pregnant, have taken antihistamine medications within the last 3-10 days, or have had a previous acute allergic reaction to the test allergen. It is important you inform your physician if this is the case. Then the physician will discuss with you the best way of evaluating your allergies. It is important you do not stop any [medication](#) for the purpose of skin testing without the knowledge of prescribing physician. Click the link to learn more about medications that could interfere with allergy tests.

One out of thousand skin tests may result in an acute allergic reaction known as [anaphylaxis](#) within two hours after the test. Click the link to learn more about anaphylaxis. Sometimes the reactions could be delayed and protracted. Very rarely the reactions could end fatally.

For this reason it is very important that you discuss with the physician about the risk versus benefit of undergoing allergy skin test and sign an informed consent. If you have any questions or concerns in this regard, please clarify with the physician before the test. You can feel confident in the knowledge that we have people and equipment available at our facility to take care of such reactions.

With the intradermal method, the allergens which tested negative by prick method are retested by injecting minute amounts of the allergens into the skin using syringes and needles. Interpretation, risks and contraindications are similar to prick tests. In general prick and intradermal tests are done on two different days to minimize the risk of allergic reactions and to avoid discomfort. We tend to avoid doing intradermal tests in small children (< 8 years) and in needle-shy individuals. However bear in mind that without doing intradermal tests, allergies cannot be ruled out conclusively.

Most of the insurances cover the entire cost of these procedures. Some insurance may require prior authorization. Check with your insurance company for details. Call our office if you would like to [schedule an appointment](#).