

Allergy Skin Testing

Allergy skin testing is helpful in determining the specific allergens that cause your allergy symptoms. This information will be used to plan your treatment.

Allergy skin testing requires applying antigens on your forearms or your upper arms, and in some cases, both. Allergy testing is generally safe, but it can worsen allergy symptoms and asthma. In rare cases, allergy testing also can produce the potentially life-threatening reaction of anaphylaxis (a hypersensitivity reaction producing respiratory symptoms, fainting, itching, and hives).

Complications of Allergy Testing

To help avoid complications of testing, tell your doctor if:

- You have a prior history of an anaphylactic reaction
- You are on beta blockers, ACE inhibitors, tricyclic antidepressants, or MAO inhibitors (These medications are commonly used to treat hypertension, heart disease, migraines, depression, glaucoma and renal disease)
- You have unstable asthma or are experiencing a worsening of asthma symptoms

You may have one or many itchy areas after skin testing. This is not unexpected. These usually resolve by the next day.

Preparing for Your Allergy Testing

Certain medications and supplements may alter allergy testing results. Therefore, beginning 7 to 10 days before allergy testing:

- Avoid all antihistamines (Allegra[®], Zyrtec[®], Claritin[®], Benadryl[®], Astelin[®], Vistaril[®], Atarax[®], etc.)
- Avoid over-the-counter allergy and sinus remedies (Many of these preparations contain antihistamines.)
- Avoid herbal remedies (St. John's Wort, Green Tea, licorice, Saw Palmetto, etc.)
- Avoid applying topical steroids (Cortaid[®], hydrocortisone cream, etc.) to your forearms and your upper arms

In addition, please remember:

- Tell your doctor if you have a skin rash
- Avoid certain anti-anxiety medications (Xanax[®]) for 4 to 7 days prior to testing
- Avoid exercising immediately before and after testing

Consult your doctor or health care provider before discontinuing a prescription medication.

