

Allergy Skin Testing FAQ

1. What is skin allergy testing?

Allergy skin testing involves the use of an allergen to provoke an allergy response in the skin. The presence and severity of the allergy can be accurately determined by skin testing. Allergens that are commonly tested for include local area trees, grasses, weeds, molds, and animal dander.

2. How is skin testing done?

Skin testing is performed by placing substances containing the allergen, referred to as extracts, just beneath the skin using a specialized “skin prick” device. Minor discomfort and itching are common during the procedure but short-lived.

3. What do the results show?

Skin testing helps to diagnose and quantify immediate-type hypersensitivity reactions. This is the type of reaction an individual experiences when exposed to an allergen. Symptoms associated with this response include nasal congestion, post nasal drainage, nasal/eye itching, coughing, shortness of breath, and rarely anaphylaxis. The skin responds to this exposure by becoming red and inflamed, similar to a mosquito bite. The exact size of the raised area shows how allergic you are to that specific allergen.

4. How does skin testing help me?

Skin testing is a simple way to find out what specific substances are causing your allergies. By pinpointing the specific allergens causing your symptoms, your doctor can tailor your treatment to your specific allergy profile.

5. How do I prepare for my allergy testing?

Your doctor will give you a list of medications that must be discontinued one week before your allergy skin testing. If these medications are taken within 7 days of your scheduled test, the results will not be accurate. Your test will need to be rescheduled under these circumstances. Recommended attire on the day of testing is a short sleeve shirt. Allergy testing is conducted on the upper arm, forearm, and/or upper back.