Allergy Testing

An allergy is an immune system reaction to a substance, such as pet dander, grasses or trees, foods, medicines, or other materials. When a person comes in contact with what they are sensitive to, called an allergen, it triggers a body reaction. Some allergic reactions can cause skin rash, coughing or sneezing. In more serious cases, allergies can cause breathing problems or shock.

Sometimes, people have signs of an allergy, but don’t know what is causing it. Or, they have a known allergy, but do not know if it is getting better or worse. Tests are given to determine what allergen and how much of it triggers a reaction in the body.

Types of Allergy Tests

There are different ways to check for allergies:

- **Skin Tests:** Skin tests can be done in the doctor’s office. If many skin tests are needed to find out the cause of your allergy, plan to be at the doctor’s office for 2 or more hours. Small amounts of the allergen are placed on the skin. The skin is cleaned and then one or more allergens are tested. After a short waiting period, the skin is checked for signs of reaction, such as swelling and redness.

- **Blood Tests:** Small vials of blood are taken in a laboratory and then tested against the allergen(s). Your arm will be cleaned and a tourniquet placed above your elbow. You will be asked to make a fist. A needle will be inserted and used to collect the blood. When finished, pressure is applied to the site, and you will get a bandage. A report will be sent to your doctor who will share the results with you.

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How to Prepare for Allergy Testing

To get accurate test results, it is important to **stop taking these medicines as they have an antihistamine in them**:

- One week (7 days) before testing, stop taking:
  - Alavert (loratidine)
  - Allegra (fexofenadine)
  - Atarax or Vistaril (Hydroxyzine)
  - Benadryl (diphenhydramine)
  - Clarinex (desloratadine)
  - Claritin (loratidine)
  - Palgic (carbinoxamine maleate)
  - Phenergan (promethazine)
  - Xyzal (levocetirizine)
  - Zyrtec (cetirizine)
  - Steroid and antihistamine nasal sprays or eye drops, such as: Nasacort, Flonase, Astepro, Astelin, Nasonex, Omnaris, Patanase, Rhinocort, Veramyst, Optivar, Bepreve, Elestat, Pataday, and Patanol

- These medicines can interfere with testing. Please talk with your doctor if you take these medicines:
  - Axid (nizatidine)
  - Elavil (amitriptyline)
  - Pepcid (famotidine)
  - Remeron (mirtazapine)
  - Sinequan (doxepin)
  - Tagamet (cimetidine)
  - Zantac (ranitidine)

- **Continue to take all asthma medicines.**

- **Continue to take all inhaled medicines as prescribed unless you are told to stop for testing by your doctor.**

- If you are not sure if other medicines you take have antihistamine in them or can change your test results, please talk with your doctor.

- If you feel you are not able to stop your medicines, please talk to your doctor. A decision may be made to reschedule your test.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.