

What should I do, or not do, before my allergy test?

- Do not take antihistamines for three days before testing. If this is not possible, contact your provider to discuss options so you can undergo the allergy test as scheduled!
- Notify your provider before the test if you take beta blockers (blood pressure medication). If you are using beta blockers at the time of testing, your provider will perform a blood test instead of a skin test.
- Alert your provider if there's any chance you're pregnant. He or she can test for pregnancy before the skin test. If you *are* pregnant, you will receive a blood test instead of a skin test.
- Tell your provider if you are experiencing any signs of a severe allergic reaction on the day of testing (e.g. hives or difficulty breathing).
- Inform your provider if you have been diagnosed with cancer or an immune disorder.

What should I expect during testing?

Your provider will clean your skin on your back with an alcohol swab. That will feel cool and slightly wet. He or she will warn you before the testing begins. As the first set of antigens is applied to your skin, you'll feel minor pressure from the tines of the testing device. This will last for just a few seconds and then be repeated in five areas. You can expect slight discomfort, as well as some itchiness from positive results. Try to avoid scratching while the test develops. Notify your provider if you feel symptoms other than itchiness.

Will the tines penetrate my skin?

No, the testing unit (MAST device) is pressed onto your skin; no blood is drawn. If a spot of blood does appear, the provider simply blots the area and continues the procedure.

How long will it take for results to develop?

Results will be available in just 15 minutes. An allergy technician will check on you every five minutes or so during that time to make sure you are okay. After 15 minutes, he or she will read the results and remove the antigens with an alcohol swab.

What if I am extremely uncomfortable with reactions before 15 minutes are up?

If you have clearly positive reactions and are very uncomfortable, the technician will wipe the antigen off and read the results early.

How does my provider measure the reaction?

Reactions are evaluated by measuring raised areas of skin with a millimeter ruler. Allergic severity is graded as follows: 2-4mm=low; 5-7=moderate; 8-10=high; 11-13=very high.

What happens after the test?

The provider wipes the antigens off the skin with alcohol wipes. You may then receive hydrocortisone cream and/or oral Claritin if necessary to ease any lingering discomfort or itchiness. Then your provider will explain the results and discuss your options for treatment, if applicable.

How long will the reaction last after testing?

Itching begins to resolve as soon as the antigen is wiped away. Bumps usually last about an hour. In rare cases, the reaction may last longer but it is generally not uncomfortable. For the very rare cases of lasting reaction, Claritin and hydrocortisone cream help minimize discomfort.

How much does testing cost?

It is covered by most insurance plans. You will only be responsible for your regular co-pay and deductible.

Is there an age limit for testing and treatment?

No. Small children will be tested for fewer antigens than older children and adults, but the test is safe for children of any age.

Can I be tested if I have a skin condition or moles?

Yes. If possible, your provider will place the test on areas that are not acutely affected. If there are no unaffected areas, you will receive a blood test instead of a skin test.

Can I be tested if I have a tattoo?

Yes. The technician will place the test on areas that are not inked. He or she may use ink-free areas on your back, arms, or legs. If you are inked in all areas, you will receive a blood test instead of a skin test.