

Skin Prick Testing



A Guide for Patients



A distributor of allerg^{oo}pharma

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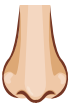
What is an allergy?



An allergy develops when the body's immune system overreacts to a substance that is not normally harmful e.g. grass pollen. In allergic reactions the body produces powerful chemicals such as histamine. These chemicals cause unpleasant symptoms and can be harmful and cause damage to the body.

People can have allergies to almost anything, from animals, bee and wasp stings to grasses or even chocolate. The substances that cause reactions are called allergens.

Symptoms include:



Urge to sneeze, runny or blocked nose causing breathing difficulty (rhinitis).



Itching, reddening, watering, swelling (conjunctivitis).



Asthma causing coughing, wheezing and occasionally acute breathing difficulty.



Nettle rash or eczema may occur on direct skin contact with some inhalant allergens.

What is a skin prick test?



A skin prick test is used to diagnose allergies. The nurse will prick gently through a drop of allergen extract placed on the surface of the arm. If you are allergic to the allergen you will have a small, itchy swelling and reddening of the skin after 10-15 minutes.

Why am I having a skin prick test done?

Your doctor has decided that you might have an allergy, so you will be asked when your symptoms are most obvious, such as inside the home, outdoors, nighttime etc. From that information the doctor can choose which allergens you need testing with.

What must I do before the skin prick test?

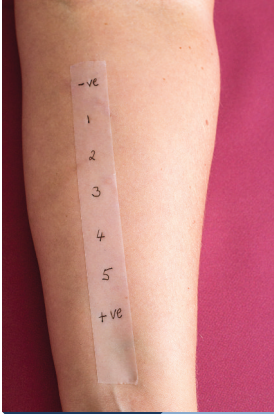
You should not take any antihistamines or cough medicines for at least 3 days before attending your skin prick test clinic; this is because these medicines interfere with the body's reaction to the skin prick test and could suppress your test results. Please speak to a pharmacist if you are unsure of the ingredients in any medicine you are currently taking.

Performing a skin prick test

Step 1

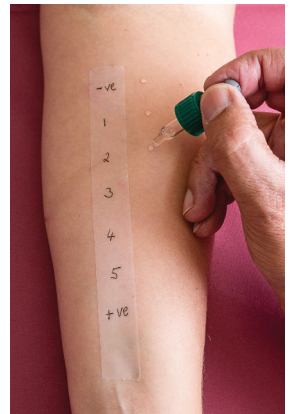
The nurse will rest your arm near the edge of a table. Using a skin marking pen, they will mark and code the inside of the forearm, either directly or onto Scotch Magic Tape™ (with + and - for the controls). The test site should be from >5cm above the wrist to >3cm from the cubital fossa, with the tests 3cm apart.

Scotch Magic Tape™ is a registered trademark of 3M.



Step 2

The nurse will then apply one drop of each allergen solution on to the skin next to its code number.



Step 3

They will then prick your skin through the drop holding the Allergopharma lancet vertically. A constant pressure will be kept for 1 second then the lancet will be removed.

What can I be allergic to?

There are many different allergens, a few of which are listed below. Please note however that this list is not exhaustive.



Pollens

Allergic rhinoconjunctivitis, commonly referred to as hay fever, is one of the most common allergic diseases and consists of seasonal eye and nasal symptoms. The time of years of the symptoms depends on which trees or grasses you are allergic to.

If you are suspected of being allergic to pollens, your nurse may test you for the following allergens:

- ◇ Early blossoming trees including alder, hazel, poplar, elm and willow.
- ◇ Mid blossoming trees including birch, beech, oak and plane.
- ◇ A mixture of grasses.



Animal Epithelia

Proteins which are found in an animal's dander, skin cells, urine and saliva can cause allergic reactions. Common animals causing allergic reactions include cats, dogs, guinea pigs, rabbits, horses and hamsters.





Moulds

Mould spores can also trigger allergic reactions, whether they be indoor moulds commonly found in bathrooms in damp houses or outdoor moulds found on plants.



House Dust Mites

If you have symptoms similar to hay fever all year round, it is possible you may have an allergy to house dust mites. The most common type of house dust mite is dermatophagoides pteronyssinus and can be found in most homes. High levels of dust are found in pillow, mattresses, duvets and soft furnishings. Your nurse is very likely to test you for this allergy.



Foods

Sometimes you can react to certain foods, be it when consumed or on contact with the skin. Common food allergens include milk and eggs (especially in children), fruit, vegetables, fish, nuts and meat.



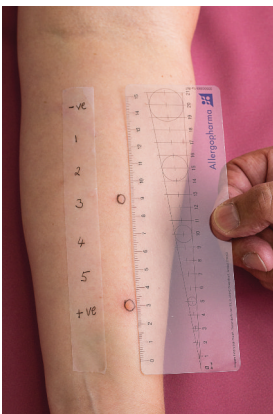


Step 4

Your arm will then be blotted dry rather than wiped to avoid cross-contamination between the allergens

Step 5

You will then be instructed to wait for 15 - 20 minutes, however the reactions will be observed at regular intervals to see how they progress.



Step 6

After the time has elapsed, the nurse will read the reactions. They may draw around each wheal with a fine skin marker pen and then measure the diameter of each wheal directly or transfer the marked wheals and codes to a report form.

What happens after my skin prick test?



The reactions disappear after 2 to 3 hours.

The nurse may apply cream to stop any itchiness caused by the reactions.

You may resume your medication unless the doctor advises otherwise.

The symptoms of allergy can be controlled using medication in the form of tablets, inhalers, creams etc. depending on the location, type and severity of the symptoms. Remember these medications do not cure the allergy and only provide relief while they are taken or applied. Your doctor will prescribe the treatment most suitable for you.

Your doctor will also give you advice about ways to control your allergy.



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