

Stone Oak *Family Doctors, P.A.*

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IF YOU ARE SCHEDULED OR PLAN TO HAVE ALLERGY TESTING:

Are you ready for the first steps to an allergy symptom-free life? We all know the most common symptoms of allergies such as stuffy nose, itchy watery eyes, sinus pressure, and sneezing. Do you know that allergies can also cause skin rashes like eczema and hives, migraines, asthma, ear and eye infections, chronic sinus infections, tonsillitis and some gastrointestinal problems? This can make your life miserable during allergy season or all year long. Allergy skin testing helps us identify seventy (70) potential environmental indoor and outdoor allergy triggers. If food allergies are suspected, testing can be done through simple blood tests.

Allergy skin testing is relatively painless. Small scratches (needle -free) are made on the skin of your back while applying the possible offensive agents (also called the antigens). If you are allergic to an antigen, it will cause a hive within 15 – 20 minutes that may be slightly itchy. We record all of your responses and the degree to which you react. The entire time in the office should be about 30 minutes. Let us know if you are on a beta blocker medication (often used to treat hypertension or migraines) as this can blunt treatment for rare cases of severe allergic reactions. If you have asthma, bring your inhalers to your appointment. At any time during testing, let us know if you feel flush, short of breath, chest tightness, and nausea or feel swelling in your throat. These are very rare reactions, but can occur.

The first way to use the allergy skin testing results is it to learn what allergic agents or triggers you need to avoid. Without testing you may have no idea what to avoid. Allergy symptoms are cumulative. This means that the more allergic agents you are exposed to, the more likely you will reach the allergy symptom threshold to display symptoms. The more allergenic agents you can avoid the less likely you are to have symptoms.

The next step in managing your allergies is pharmaceuticals. This is usually done with antihistamine pills (Xyzal, Zyrtec, Claritin, Allegra, Benadryl), nasal sprays (Astelin, Astepro, Patanase), leukotriene inhibitors (Singulair), steroid nasal sprays (Flonase, Nasonex, Nasacort) and in severe cases, steroid pills or shots. These medications provide symptom relief until the allergy season is over.

The best option is to desensitize your immune system to the offending antigen(s). This can be done with allergy shots or sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT). SLIT drops are convenient and can be done at home. You place increasing concentrations of the offending antigens in dropper form under your tongue every day. There is no traveling to the doctor's office several times a week for a shot. Allergy drops in the SLIT form can contain many more antigens (allergy extracts) than shots. Allergy shots can take 3-5 years to build up immunity and you will have to see an Allergy Specialist. SLIT therapy is safer with less chance of an anaphylactic reaction. After one year on SLIT therapy, we retest you to see if you are still having reactions. If so, then you continue with the drops for another year. Most people are done after one year, but there have been cases where people need 3 years of SLIT therapy.

Most insurance companies DO pay for allergy skin testing once per year. You will want to check with your insurance company to confirm coverage. SLIT (drop therapy) is NOT covered by insurance and requires a commitment of \$75-\$90 a month for one year. You do not need to start SLIT drops to have the skin testing done. SLIT drops are an option and convenience that we provide to our allergy patients. If you should decide to proceed with SLIT drops, we send a prescription to a compounding pharmacy after the skin testing is completed.

Medications To Stop 3 Weeks Prior To Allergy Skin Testing:

Prednisone, Medrol Dose Pak, Steroid Shots. (We will check histamine response on the day of testing prior to proceeding with the test, so let us know if you have taken steroids.)

Topical cream or ointment steroids on your back (hydrocortisone, triamcinolone, clobetasol, etc.)

Medications To Stop 10 days Prior To Allergy Skin Testing:

Atarax, Vistaril/ hydroxyzine

Claritin, Alavert, Allerclear/ loratadine, Clarinex, Desloratadine

Ephedrine/Primatene

Periactin/ cyproheptadine

Tofranil/imipramine

Medications To Stop 7 Days Prior To Allergy Skin Testing:

ANTIHISTAMINES: Allegra/ fexofenadine, Zyrtec/ cetirizine, Xyzal/ levocetirizine, Hismanal

Benadryl/ diphenhydramine (Stop Claritin 10 days prior)

Cold meds with antihistamines: Chlorpheniramine, brompheniramine, carbinoxamine, Clemastine, Cyproheptadine, Diphenhydramine or Dimenhydrinate

Sleep aids like Tylenol PM and Unisom w/ diphenhydramine (an antihistamine)
Nyquil

Tricyclic Antidepressants: Elavil/ amitriptyline, Pamelor/ nortriptyline, Silenor/Zonalon/Doxepin

Risperidone/ Risperdal

Seroquel/ quetiapine

Antivert/ meclizine

Phenergan/ promethazine

Xolair IgE blocker injection

Benzodiazepines: Ativan/ lorazepam, Valium/ diazepam, Xanax/ alprazolam, Klonopin/ clonazepam, Versed/ midazolam

Herbs: Butterbur, stinging nettle, Citrus unshiu, lycopus lucidus, spirulina, licorice, green tea extract, saw Palmetto, St. John's Wort, Feverfew, Milk Thistle, Astragalus cellulose powder, Indian Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine.

Medications To Stop 3 Days Prior To Allergy Skin Testing:

Aleve

Axid, Pepcid/ famotidine, Tagamet/ cimetidine, Zantac/ ranitidine

Wellbutrin/ Bupropion

Lunesta/ eszopiclone, Ambien/ zolpidem, trazodone/ Oleptro

Antihistamine Nose Spray: Astelin, Astepro, Patanase, Dymista/ azelastine

Antihistamine Eye Drops: Optivar, Pataday, Patanol and Astelin/ azelastine

On The Day Of Allergy Skin Testing:

Do not use Steroid Nasal sprays (Flonase, Nasonex, Nasacort, etc) or take ADHD/ADD medications.

Please bring all allergy medication and inhalers with you to restart once testing is complete.

It is OK to take Singulair/montelukast, guaifenesin, phenylephrine, pseudoephedrine and albuterol and other asthma inhalers on the day of testing.

Do not wear perfume or cologne.

It is OK to eat prior to testing.

It is OK to take Aspirin, Motrin and Tylenol.