

## Allergy Testing - Fast Facts

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1. Allergy testing is used to identify or confirm what allergens are causing allergy and/or asthma symptoms.
2. Skin prick tests (SPT) or blood tests measure allergen specific Immunoglobulin E (IgE) antibodies:
  - Skin prick testing should be supervised by a doctor who is trained to select allergens, interpret results, and treat an allergic reaction if it occurs. The tests are usually performed on a patient's forearm or back. If the result is positive, a small itchy lump (wheal) and red flare will appear at the site of the skin prick test within 15-20 minutes.
  - Blood tests for allergen specific IgE antibodies can be performed when skin prick testing is not easily available, when a patient has severe eczema, or when a person is taking a medication (such as antihistamines) that may interfere with the results.
3. A positive result from an allergy test indicates sensitivity to an allergen and it is important to consider the patient's history of symptoms before a diagnosis can be made.
4. Allergy test results allow doctors to recommend suitable treatment and management options. This includes advice on how to avoid or minimise exposure to allergens that cause symptoms.
5. Allergy tests are usually performed on people with allergic rhinitis (hay fever), asthma or suspected allergic reactions to insects, foods, drugs (medications), and occupational allergens (such as animal allergy for vets and latex allergy for nurses).
6. Oral allergen challenge tests are sometimes required when the cause of a severe allergy (anaphylaxis) has not been confirmed. Oral allergen challenge testing is normally only performed using foods or medications under the supervision of a clinical immunology/allergy specialist, with immediate access to emergency equipment.
7. Patch tests are used to test for allergic contact dermatitis that is triggered by substances such as metals, cosmetic preservatives, or various plants. Patch tests are usually performed on a patient's back, and supervised by a health professional who is trained to select allergens and interpret results.
8. Some methods that claim to test for allergy are unproven and NOT recommended by ASCIA. These include cytotoxic food testing, kinesiology, hair analysis, vega testing (electro-diagnostic), electrodermal testing, pulse testing, reflexology, Bryan's or Alcat tests, and Immunoglobulin G (IgG) to foods. These tests can result in misdiagnosis, ineffective treatments, costly and often dangerous dietary restrictions.

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For more information go to [www.allergy.org.au/patients/allergy-testing](http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/allergy-testing)

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