

## ALLERGY SKIN TESTING INFORMATION SHEET

### Introduction

Following a historic review of your symptoms and an appropriate physical assessment with your provider, skin testing will be performed by a registered nurse (RN) while your provider is present in the clinic. Skin testing is performed to obtain information regarding your current allergies. Skin testing utilizes extracts of inhalants (pollen, dust, feather, dander, etc.), foods, stinging insect venoms (honey bee, wasp, hornet, yellow jacket), and medications to introduce tiny amounts of these substances below the surface of the skin to provoke a localized allergic reaction in the skin. Skin testing provides immediate and clinically relevant assessment of a person's current allergic sensitization status. It is possible for skin testing results to be equivocal, and allergy testing is not guaranteed to provide definitive results.

A positive skin test typically looks like a dime-sized slightly raised red and itchy bump which appears only at those test sites with substances for which a person has current allergy. A small percentage of patients may experience more systemic symptoms such as hives, sneezing, runny nose, cough or wheezing. In very rare circumstances, skin testing can cause anaphylaxis. The usual alternative method to skin testing is a blood test, known as a radioallergosorbent (RAST) test. RAST tests are not as sensitive as skin tests and have a higher rate of false positive results.

Upon completion of the skin testing, your provider will meet with you to discuss the results, establish a diagnosis, and implement a treatment plan. Immunotherapy (also known as allergy shots or desensitization) may be recommended depending on the correlation of the skin testing results with your symptoms and patient treatment preferences.

### Skin Test Procedure

The skin test procedure will take approximately 1-2 hours. The testing is done in two steps: prick, and intradermal levels.

**1. Prick Level:** A drop of allergenic extract is placed on either the forearm or the back. A needle is used to prick the skin through the drop of extract. After placement of the extract you will be asked to wait fifteen minutes. After fifteen minutes the RN and doctor will read the results. A positive reaction appears as a dime-sized itchy red bump surrounded by a rim of redness. Any substances that do not have a positive prick test result may be retested at the intradermal level. (NOTE: food testing is only done by prick testing where a negative reaction is definitive).

**2. Intradermal Level:** The allergenic extract is injected under the skin of the upper arm using a small needle. After placement of the extract you will be asked to wait fifteen minutes. After fifteen minutes, the RN and doctor will read the results. A positive reaction appears as a raised red bump with surrounding redness.

### Reactions and Discomfort

In addition to discomfort associated with the prick or intradermal injection, there will likely be itching at the skin testing sites. Rarely patients with very strong positive skin test reactions may experience a systemic reaction with generalized itching and hives. Under extremely rare conditions, more serious systemic symptoms, including upper respiratory obstruction, choking, breathlessness, wheezing, or life-threatening anaphylaxis, may occur. Patients who experience systemic reactions may require immediate treatment with antihistamines, steroids, albuterol, and/or epinephrine (adrenaline) and may need to be transported by ambulance to the emergency room for further evaluation.