Allergy Sinus & Arthritis Clinic. PLLC

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Patient Instruction Sheet for Allergy Skin Testing

Skin Test: Skin tests are methods of testing for allergic antibodies. A test consists of introducing small amounts of the suspected substance, or allergen, into the skin and noting the development of a positive reaction (which consists of a welt or hive with surrounding redness). The results are read at 15 to 20 minutes after the application of the allergen. The skin test methods are:

   Prick Method: The skin is pricked with a very short needle coated with a drop of allergen (ex ragweed pollen).

   Intradermal Method: This method consists of injecting small amounts of an allergen into the superficial layers of the skin.

Interpreting the clinical significance of skin tests requires skillful correlation of the test results with the patient's clinical history. Positive tests indicate the presence of allergic antibodies and are not necessarily correlated with clinical symptoms.

You may be tested to important (location) airborne allergens and possibly some foods. These may include trees, grasses, weeds, molds, dust mites, animal danders, and some foods. The skin testing generally takes 45 minutes. Prick (also known as percutaneous) tests are usually performed on your back but may also be performed on your arms. Intradermal skin tests may be performed if the prick skin tests are negative and are performed on your arms. If
you have a specific allergic sensitivity to one of the allergens, a red, raised, itchy bump (caused by histamine release into the skin) will appear on your skin within 15 to 20 minutes. These positive reactions will gradually disappear over a period of 30 to 60 minutes and, typically, no treatment is necessary for this itchiness. Occasionally, local swelling at a test site will begin 4 to 8 hours after the skin tests are applied, particularly at sites of intradermal testing. These reactions are not serious, do not indicate a meaningful allergy, and will disappear over the next couple days or so. They should be reported to your physician at your next visit. You may be scheduled for skin testing to antibiotics, local anesthetics, venoms, or other biological agents. The same guidelines apply.

If you have any questions whether or not you are using an antihistamine, you may ask the nurse or the doctor. In some instances a longer period of time off these medications may be necessary. If your condition requires continuous administration of any of the above medications, or if you have a question about a certain medication, please notify us so we may discuss this with you and determine whether alternative tests are indicated.

Skin testing will be administered at this medical facility with a medical physician present since occasional reactions may require immediate therapy. These reactions may consist of any or all of the following symptoms: itchy eyes, nose, or throat; nasal congestion; runny nose; tightness in the throat or chest; increased wheezing; lightheadedness; faintness; nausea and vomiting; hives; generalized itching; and shock, the latter under extreme circumstances.

Please let the physician and nurse know if you are:
   1) Pregnant as allergy testing may be post-poned until after pregnancy.
   2) Taking beta blockers, medications that may make the treatment of the reaction to skin testing more difficult.

Please note that these reactions rarely occur but in the event a reaction would occur, the staff is fully trained and emergency equipment is available. After skin testing, you will consult with your physician, who will make further recommendations regarding your treatment

Please do not cancel your appointment since the time set aside for your skin test is exclusively yours. If for any reason you need to change your skin test appointment, please give us at least 48 hours notice, due to the length of time scheduled for skin testing, a last minute change results in a loss of valuable time that another patient might have utilized.