

Allergy Testing

Allergy testing is important in order to distinguish between an allergic reaction and another health problem. Several tests are offered by physicians, which include:

-Skin Test: A small amount of the allergy-causing substance is placed on the skin then the skin is scratched so that the allergen goes under the skin. The physician then waits to see if there is a reaction.

-“Use or Elimination” Test: The doctor tells the patient to avoid certain things or use certain things to see how the patient reacts in each situation.

-Eye Drops: A dissolved allergen can be dropped into the lower eyelid to see if the patient develops a reaction.



Resources

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology
www.aaaai.org

National Jewish Medical and Research Center
www.njc.org

Allergy and Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics
www.aanma.org

Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network
www.foodallergy.org

American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology
www.acaai.org

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
www.aafa.org

Seattle and King County-Public Health
www.metrokc.gov/health/
206-296-4600

References

Medline Plus
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/000812.htm

Al-Shifa Clinic

Email: alshifa@u.washington.edu
Website: <http://students.washington.edu/alshifa>

Allergies

*When your body
over-reacts.*



What are Allergies?

Allergies are caused by your body being too reactive to the environment. Allergies can be caused by family history, environmental conditions, and/or number and type of exposures.

Allergy is an inflammatory response to allergens. Some symptoms are:

- Nose: runny, swollen (allergic rhinitis)
- Eyes: redness and itching (allergic conjunctivitis)
- Airways: Sneezing, chest tightness, wheezing, and sometimes outright attacks of asthma, in severe cases the airway constricts due to swelling known as anaphylaxis.
- Ears: feeling of fullness, possibly pain, and impaired hearing.
- Skin: various rashes, such as eczema, hives and contact dermatitis.
- Headache from sinus pressure due to inflammation.



Symptoms of an allergic reaction:

Different allergens cause different reactions, the list below describes this:

- Inhaled allergens: stuffy nose, itchy nose and throat, mucus production, cough, dry eyes and wheezing.
- Food allergens: nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, cramping, diarrhea, or a life-threatening event.
- Plant allergens: skin rash, inflammation of affected area.
- Drug allergens: There are a variety of symptoms because it affects the whole body. It can, therefore, be life-threatening.

Treatment

There are natural and medical treatments to allergies.

- Avoidance: This simply means that, if possible, avoid whatever is causing the allergic reaction.
- Antihistamines: Such as Benadryl help prevent swelling and mucus production.
- Nasal sprays: Are used to clear out the air passage.

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Treatment, cont'd.

-Allergy Shots: This is a series of injections given over several years. This is mainly used by people with very severe symptoms or who can't take other allergy medications. The allergy shots are not for everyone and are sometimes only partly useful. They work by initially introducing small amounts of allergen and then increasing the dosage over time. This is in hopes that the body will adjust to the allergen and become less sensitive to it.

-Leukotriene Inhibitors: Such as Singular, block the substance that triggers allergies.

-Epinephrine: Such as an Epi-Pen is used to counteract a severe life-threatening allergic reaction. People with severe allergies should carry one with them at all times.

Prevention

-Breastfed babies are less likely to develop allergies because of the antibodies present in breast milk.

-A breastfeeding mother should avoid cow's milk, eggs, nuts, and peanuts.

-Infants exposed to airborne allergens such as dust and animal dander are less likely to develop allergies later in life.