Allergy Testing Preparation Guide | What to Do Before Your Allergy Test

Preparing for your allergy skin-prick test

Preparing for Your Allergy Skin-Prick Test

If your doctor has recommended **skin-prick testing for inhalational or food allergens**, preparation is usually simple. The most important thing is to let your allergy team know about your medicines before the appointment, as some medications—especially antihistamines—can affect the accuracy of skin testing.

Your test will be selected according to your **symptoms, medical history and suspected triggers**. A positive skin test indicates sensitisation to an allergen, but does not automatically mean that you have a clinical allergy. Your results must always be interpreted alongside your history.

1. Tell Us About Your Medicines

Please provide a list of all medicines you currently take, including:

- Antihistamines and allergy medicines
- Cold and flu medicines
- Nasal sprays and eye drops
- Asthma medicines/inhalers
- Antidepressants or sleeping medicines
- Blood-pressure medicines
- Other prescription or over-the-counter medicines

Antihistamines

Antihistamines can suppress the skin's response and may cause a false-negative or reduced reaction.

Depending on the specific medicine, the effect may last from several days and can be longer with some medications.

Do not stop your medication yourself. Contact our clinic before your appointment and we will advise you whether your particular medicine needs to be stopped and for how long.

Some commonly used antihistamines that may affect testing include cetirizine, levocetirizine, loratadine, desloratadine, fexofenadine, chlorpheniramine, diphenhydramine, hydroxyzine and promethazine.

Other Medicines

Many inhaled asthma medicines and nasal corticosteroid sprays generally do not interfere significantly with skin-prick testing.

If you take a **beta-blocker or certain antidepressants**, please inform your allergist. These medicines should **not be stopped without medical advice.**

2. You Usually Do Not Need to Fast

For routine skin-prick testing, you can generally **eat and drink normally** before your appointment.

There is no need to deliberately eat a suspected food before testing. If a food has previously caused a significant reaction, **do not intentionally eat it just to prepare for the test.**

3. Bring Your Allergy History

Your medical history is an important part of allergy diagnosis. Please be ready to tell us:

- What symptoms you experience
- What seems to trigger them
- How quickly symptoms begin after exposure
- How long they last
- Whether they are seasonal
- Whether they occur around dust, pets, pollens or other environmental triggers
- Which foods have caused symptoms and what happened after eating them
- Any previous allergy test results or treatments
- If available, photographs of previous hives, swelling or skin reactions

What Happens During the Test?

Skin-prick testing involves placing tiny drops of selected allergen extracts on the skin and gently pricking through them.

The test may cause mild, temporary itching or a small raised bump at sites where you are sensitised. The reactions are usually assessed after approximately **15–20 minutes**.

The allergen panel is selected according to your clinical history and may include relevant **inhalational allergens** such as house-dust mites, pollens, moulds and animal allergens, as well as selected **food allergens** when clinically indicated.

What Does a Positive Test Mean?

A positive skin-prick test means that your immune system is **sensitised to that allergen**.

It does **not automatically prove that the allergen is causing your symptoms**. For example, a person may have a positive food skin test but eat that food regularly without symptoms.

Your allergist therefore interprets:
Medical history + symptoms + exposure + examination + skin-prick test

This helps distinguish clinically relevant allergy from sensitisation and helps avoid unnecessary food or environmental restrictions.

What Does a Negative Test Mean?

A negative result makes IgE-mediated sensitisation to the tested allergen less likely, provided the test has been performed correctly and the appropriate controls are valid.

However, allergy testing is never interpreted in isolation. If your symptoms strongly suggest allergy despite a negative test, your allergist may recommend further assessment.

Your Quick Checklist

Before your appointment:

- ■ Tell us about **all medicines** you take
- ■ Ask us about antihistamines before stopping them
- ■ **Do not stop prescription medicines without medical advice**
- ■ Tell us if you take a beta-blocker or antidepressant
- ■ You can normally eat and drink as usual
- ■ Do not deliberately consume a food that has previously caused a significant reaction
- ■ Bring previous allergy reports if available
- ■ Bring photographs of previous allergic reactions if possible
- ■ Be prepared to discuss your symptoms and suspected triggers

A Simple Reminder

The goal of allergy testing is not simply to find positive results.

The goal is to identify which allergens are **clinically relevant to you** and help you understand what is actually causing your symptoms.

If you are unsure whether you should stop a medication before your appointment, **please contact our clinic rather than stopping it yourself.**

Medical Disclaimer

This guide is provided for **general patient education** and does not replace an individualized medical assessment or advice from a qualified allergy specialist.

Medication effects on skin-prick testing vary according to the specific medicine, dose, patient and testing protocol. **Do not stop prescription medicines without consulting your doctor or allergy clinic.** Patients taking beta-blockers, certain antidepressants or other medicines that may affect testing or emergency treatment require individualized advice.

Skin-prick test results indicate **allergen sensitisation and must be interpreted in conjunction with the patient's clinical history**. A positive test does not necessarily mean that a person has a clinical allergy, and a negative result does not replace appropriate medical assessment.

This information is based on current principles and recommendations from international allergy organizations, including the **American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI), American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology (ACAAI), and European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI)**.

Medical guidance and testing protocols may vary between patients and clinical settings. Your treating allergy specialist's instructions should always take priority.

Evidence basis: Current principles and recommendations from AAAAI, ACAAI and EAACI, including guidance on skin-prick testing, medication interference, and interpretation of IgE sensitisation.