

Understanding Food Allergy Diagnostics

When it comes to food allergies, the road to diagnosis can be confusing and overwhelming. Here are some fast facts to help you better understand allergy testing options and the basics of allergic sensitization. **Use this fact sheet to have a more productive conversation with your healthcare provider.**

What is the difference between **skin prick testing** and **specific IgE blood testing**?



Skin prick testing

Usually **performed in an allergist office**; usually covered by insurance

Same-day results (**~15 minutes after prick**)

Qualitative (relies on a provider observing and describing results)

Very limited component testing

Patients **cannot be taking antihistamines**

Difficult to interpret if eczema is present or you have darker skin¹



Specific IgE blood testing

Traditional blood draw **ordered by healthcare provider**; usually covered by insurance

Results in approximately **1 week**

Quantitative (test results include a quantifiable number that can be tracked over time)

Component testing available for several allergens

Antihistamine use is OK

Skin tone irrelevant and eczema is not an issue

Three facts about sensitization:



Skin prick testing and specific IgE blood testing can help you understand your allergy, but an **oral food challenge**, where a person ingests a potential allergen under clinical observation, **is the gold standard for diagnosing a food allergy.**²



Sensitizations can change over time. It is possible to outgrow an allergy,³ and it is also possible to develop an allergy later in life.⁴



Not all allergies are the same. People can be sensitized to different proteins in the same food. Component testing characterizes these differences in allergic sensitization. This information can help a patient better understand their allergy and how to manage it.²

1. Kiwong KYC, Jean T, Redjal N. Variability in Measurement of Allergen Skin Testing Results among Allergy-Immunology Specialists. *J Allergy*. 2014; Ther 5: 160.

2. Schussler E, Kattan J. Allergen Component Testing in the Diagnosis of Food Allergy. *Current Allergy and Asthma Reports*. 2015; 15(9): 55.

3. Lahood NA, Patti SU. Food Allergy Testing. *Clinics in Laboratory Medicine*. 2019; 39(4): 625-642.

4. Gupta RS, Warren CM, Smith BM, et al. Prevalence and Severity of Food Allergies Among US Adults. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2019;2(1):e185630.