



# information

## Skin testing

Skin testing is done to help the allergist find what may be causing your allergic symptoms. Your skin is pricked with small amounts of the substances that can cause allergies (e.g. dust mites, pollens, animal dander). If you react, the allergist will determine what the results mean for you, based on both the reaction and your medical history.

### How do I prepare for the test?

There are many medicines you will need to stop taking before this test. Some of the most important are described below. Please check the list in the box for more on what should be stopped.

**Antihistamines:** Antihistamines that work for 12 or 24 hours per dose should be stopped one week before the test. All others should be stopped at least 48 hours before the test.

**Benadryl (diphenhydramine):** Stop for at least 48 hours. This includes anything with "PM" in the name (such as Tylenol PM).

**Antidepressants:** Check the list in the box to see if you need to stop your antidepressant. If you do need to stop it, **check with the doctor who told you to take it before stopping this medicine.** If the doctor does not want you to stop it, please let us know.

**Sleeping pills:** Many contain antihistamines and should not be taken for 48 hours.

### Medicines to stop before your skin test

#### Stop one week before the test

- Cetirizine (Zyrtec)
- Cortisone cream to the arms or back
- Desloratadine (Clarinet)
- Doxepin (Sinequan)
- Fexofenadine (Allegra)
- Loratadine (Claritin, Alavert, or generic)
- Levocetirizine (Xyzal)

#### Stop three days before the test

- Azelastine HCL (Astelin, Astepro)
- Hydroxyzine (Atarax, Vistaril)
- Olopatadine (Patanase)

#### Stop all antihistamines two days before the test. Some examples include:

- |                                    |                   |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| ▪ Actifed                          | ▪ Extendryl       |
| ▪ Advil Allergy/Sinus              | ▪ Midol           |
| ▪ Chlorpheniramine (Chlortrimeton) | ▪ Naldecon        |
| ▪ Cyproheptadine (Periactin)       | ▪ NyQuil          |
| ▪ Contac                           | ▪ Phenergan       |
| ▪ DayQuil                          | ▪ Rynatan         |
| ▪ Deconamine                       | ▪ Simply Sleep    |
| ▪ Dimetapp                         | ▪ Sinubid         |
| ▪ Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)       | ▪ Tavist          |
| ▪ Drixoral                         | ▪ Triaminic       |
| ▪ Duravent DA                      | ▪ Tylenol Allergy |
| ▪ Dura-Tap                         | ▪ Tylenol PM      |

**All other cough/cold medicines should be stopped two days before the test.**

#### Stop one day before the test

- Amitriptyline (Elavil)
- Desipramine (Norpramin)
- Nortriptyline (Pamelor)
- Imipramine (Tofranil)
- Trazodone (Desyrel)

#### Other medicines to stop:

- Vitamin C, particularly high-dose vitamin C, such as Emergen-C (two days before)
- Large amounts of orange juice (two days before)
- Vitamin water (two days before)

**If you are on beta blockers, see page 2.**

**Medicines for menstrual cramps:** Many (such as Midol) contain antihistamines and should not be taken for 48 hours.

**Vitamin C:** Must not be taken for two days before the test. Do not take Vitamin C tablets or vitamin water and exercise drinks with Vitamin C. The amount of vitamin C in a usual daily multivitamin is small, however, and these do not have to be stopped.

**May I take asthma medicine or nasal steroids?**

**You may take these as usual.** (As noted above, antihistamine nasal sprays such as Astelin [azelastine HCL], Patanase, and Astepro should be stopped three days before the test.)

**What about beta blockers?**

We cannot do the test if you are on any beta blocker medication. Beta blockers are commonly prescribed for heart problems or high blood pressure and may also be used to treat migraines or palpitations. Examples are Tenormin (atenolol), Lopressor or Toprol-XL (metoprolol), Corgard (nadolol), Normodyne or Trandate (labetalol), and Inderal (propranolol). This is not a complete list. Your pharmacist can tell you if a medicine you are taking is a beta blocker. Please contact the office at 617-278-8100 for advice if you are on a beta blocker.

**I am not sure if I should take a particular medicine. What should I do?**

Please call us at 617-278-8100 during regular business hours if you have any questions about what medicines to take or not to take before your test.

**What about pregnancy?**

Please let us know if there is a chance that you may be pregnant. In most cases, skin testing cannot be done in pregnant individuals, but there may be other options for testing.

**What else do I need to know about the day of the test?**

- Please let us know 48 hours in advance if you need to cancel your appointment. Also, please let us know if you have a fever of more than 100.5° or you do not feel well before you come in. If you are sick, especially if you are having a flare of asthma, your skin testing may be postponed.
- Please **bring all your medications – or a list of all your medicines, with doses – with you.**
- The skin test is done on the upper arms and sometimes on the back. Please wear sleeveless or loose-fitting clothes. **Do not** use creams or powders on your arms or back on the day of your test. **Don't use cortisone creams on your arms or back for about one week before the test.**
- If you have been told you are having an “oral challenge” along with your skin test, please do not

eat or drink anything (except water) before the test. (An oral challenge is when you are given small amounts of foods you have been allergic to in the past.) If you are not having an oral challenge, you may eat normally before your skin test.

- It usually takes two hours to complete the testing process, including a wrap-up meeting with the allergy provider.

**When will I know the results?** You will meet with the provider after the test to discuss the results and your follow-up plan.