

Allergy Testing



What is an allergy?

An allergy is the response of the body's immune system to a normally harmless substance, such as animal hairs, pollen, food, or house dust mite. The body has an automatic reaction to what it sees as a threat, and while in most people these substances pose no problem, in those with allergies the immune system identifies them as a threat and produces an inappropriate response to them. Allergies are classified into IgE mediated and non-IgE mediated allergies.

Allergies first start when cells in the immune system wrongly identify an everyday, normally harmless, substance as an attacker. In IgE mediated allergies the immune system then begins to produce a class of antibodies known as IgE, specific for that particular allergen, which will later alert the fighting cells (mast cells and basophils) within the immune system every time that this substance is encountered. The mast cells bind with the IgE antibodies so that they can identify the allergen next time it comes into contact with the body. This is called sensitisation, and at this stage there are no physical symptoms of an allergy.

Mast cells are present in all the tissue that is in contact with the external environment, such as the skin, nose, eyes, mouth, throat, stomach and gut. The next time that the same allergen is encountered the mast cells identify it as an intruder and produce histamine and other chemicals. It is the release of the histamine and other chemicals and their effect on the body that cause allergic symptoms.

An allergy can therefore cause anything from a runny nose, or itchy eyes and mouth, to skin rash and gastrointestinal symptoms such as abdominal discomfort (?tummy ache?) and vomiting. Severe allergies can cause breathing problems or a drop in blood pressure. Severe allergic reactions are also known as anaphylaxis, and can be life-threatening.

Allergy is widespread and affects approximately one in four of the population in the UK at some time in their lives. Each year the numbers are increasing by 5%, with as many as half of all those affected being children.

Why do I need this Allergy test?

Allergies can cause numerous problems and if an allergic reaction occurs the symptoms can vary from person to person and can be severe causing a great deal of discomfort and distress. Symptoms of an allergic reaction can include:-

- Eczema
- Itchy, blocked, runny nose
- Sneezing
- Itchy, sore/red or watery eyes
- Nasal congestion
- Itching and/or swelling of the lips, tongue and face
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath or wheezing
- Dry, itchy throat or tongue
- Itchy skin or a rash
- Headache
- General malaise
- Anaphylactic shock

This test will identify if there is an abnormally high level of IgE antibodies in the blood that will confirm if an allergy is present. Once established your medical professional can take the next steps to identify the particular cause of the allergy - usually by what are known as "skin patch tests". Once the cause of the allergic reaction is known steps can be taken to avoid the cause or taking medicants to prevent or minimise the allergic reaction.

Your appointment will involve a consultation where you will be asked specific questions about your health and symptoms. you may be offered a urine test, a finger prick blood test.

Muscle resistance test could also be carried out. The results are then given to you within the consultation period.

Duration of Session 45 minutes

Cost of treatment £25-£40 depending on tests used.