Allergies:
YOUR GUIDE TO TESTING AND TREATMENT
WHAT CAUSES ALLERGIES AND HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE ANY?

An allergy is really a case of mistaken identity. It occurs when your body’s immune system mistakes a harmless substance for a dangerous one and defends your body against the “harmful” intruder. Common substances that cause allergies, called allergens, include pet dander, dust mites, tree pollen, ragweed pollen, mold, stinging insects and food.

Symptoms of inhalant or environmental allergies include:
- Itchy, runny nose
- Itchy, watery eyes
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Asthma
- Rash

If you suspect you suffer from allergies, the staff at ENT and Allergy Center of Missouri can help. After seeing you for an initial exam, your allergy provider may recommend allergy tests to determine which allergens are causing your symptoms. If you decide to test, you may be temporarily asked to stop certain medications to ensure more accurate results.
There are three types of allergy skin testing given to adults and children ages 4 years and up: prick testing, intradermal testing and patch testing. Testing is available for some food allergens via prick testing or a blood draw; however, treatment options for food allergies are limited to avoidance at this time.

**PRICK TESTING** is the most common test choice ordered by allergists because of its high rate of reliability and convenience to the patient. The prick test takes about 45 minutes.

Allergens are applied to the arms and reactions are measured 20 minutes later. While this procedure is well tolerated, children and adults may use a numbing cream that is applied to their forearms one hour prior to testing to lessen any discomfort. Simply let your provider know if you would like the numbing cream when you set your appointment.

A positive test result is called a wheal and looks like a mosquito bite. Swelling greater than 3 mm indicates an allergic response and usually disappears within a couple of hours. If your provider feels that skin testing is not appropriate, he or she may order blood testing, which is performed at a lab outside the clinic.

**PATCH TESTING** involves placing panels of substances to which you may be allergic on your upper back. The patches remain on your back for 48 to 72 hours and should not get wet during this time. Results are read 48 hours after application and again after another 48 hours in case of a delayed reaction.

**INTRADERMAL TESTING (IDT)** is performed on the upper arms by placing a small amount of the allergens just under the skin with a very tiny needle. These results are read after 20 minutes. IDT takes about 90 minutes from start to finish.
RISKS OF ALLERGY TESTING

The most serious reaction that can occur with skin testing is anaphylaxis. This is a whole body reaction that can include hives, chest tightness, wheezing, lip or throat swelling. Adverse reactions are rare, and our highly qualified staff is trained to handle these types of events. To lessen the risk of anaphylaxis, your testing appointment may be rescheduled if any of the following apply:

• You are taking an antihistamine, beta-blocker, tri-cyclic antidepressant, contra-indicated natural medicine or other medications that can affect the test results (we will provide you with a complete list of these medications).
• You are pregnant or breastfeeding.
• You have a cold, upper respiratory infection or fever.

COST OF ALLERGY TESTING

Allergy testing is often covered by health insurance. The skin prick and IDT tests are billed by the number of allergens tested, which is typically 40 in a prick test and 24 in an IDT test. Use the following codes and quantity information to ask your insurance provider for your exact coverage:

- Prick test usually x40 .......... 95004
- IDT usually x24 ................. 95024
- Patch Test .......................... 95044

Blood tests are conducted at a lab that has its own associated charges.

MY ALLERGY TEST WAS POSITIVE – WHAT’S NEXT?

After you have been tested, a member of our allergy team will discuss your test results and treatment options with you. Treatment options include:

Avoidance
Avoidance means avoiding the allergens that trigger the symptoms. Simply staying away and avoiding contact with known allergens will reduce your symptoms.

For pet allergies, we encourage patients to keep animals out of the bedroom. Frequent vacuuming can also reduce exposure to pet dander.

For mold allergies, clean mildew from moist areas and wipe out air ducts.

For pollen allergies, shower, change clothes and use a nasal irrigation kit when coming in from outdoors.

Medications
Allergy medications may help to relieve your symptoms. Medications come in the form of oral tablets and suspensions (liquids), nasal sprays, eye drops and inhaled options. Your provider can tailor your medication to the symptoms you are experiencing.
IMMUNOTHERAPY

Immunotherapy exposes your body to allergens in a safe and controlled manner to reduce your body’s immune response over time. It requires a relatively long-term commitment of 3-5 years to reach the full benefit. However, for some patients, especially those with asthma, treatment may be longer. There are two types of immunotherapy, commonly referred to as shot therapy and drop therapy.

Both forms of therapy can markedly diminish symptoms of allergic rhinitis, sinusitis and allergic asthma as well as reduce the need for allergy medications. Both are effective against all types of environmental allergens. Each vial is mixed using the antigens you reacted to positively during allergy testing. We begin with a weak solution of your allergens and increase the proportion over time to a target level. This process is called escalation. Before your first injection, you will have a vial test to ensure your shots are at the right dosage. Before beginning drop therapy, you will make an appointment to learn how to take your drops and to receive a drop test that ensures you have no adverse reaction to the therapy.

SHOT THERAPY (SCIT) is delivered by regular weekly injections. Injections are only given in our office or in the office of a provider approved by our clinic. Patients must wait 20 minutes in the office after an injection is given. Most serious reactions occur within this time frame. Minor reactions to SCIT include swelling at the site, itching and redness.

DROP THERAPY (SLIT) is delivered by placing drops under the tongue daily. It is a relatively new form of allergy treatment in the U.S. However, SLIT has been safely and effectively used in both children and adults in Europe for decades. Both the AAOA (American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy) and the AAAAI (American Academy of Allergic Asthma and Immunology) have approved sublingual drop therapy. SLIT vials are made with the same antigens used for shot therapy.

Administering Drops
Always stand in front of a mirror to watch the drop fall beneath the tongue. Do not eat, drink, shower or exercise 20 minutes before/after taking your drops. Occasionally patients will experience mild tingling or itching in the mouth. Drops can travel with you if you plan time away from home. If you miss a dose, pick up where you left off and DO NOT try to make up any missed doses. If you miss more than one month of therapy, please contact the clinic for a revised schedule.
Reordering Drops
Each allergy drop vial is scheduled to be a 16-week supply. The schedule we provide to track your drop usage will inform you when it is time to re-order. Drops may be re-ordered by calling the ENT and Allergy Center. You may arrange payment over the phone, or come to the clinic to make the payment. Currently, many insurance companies cover drop therapy (with the exception of government payers).

Drop Therapy FAQs
• If my vial runs out of drops before the end of the 16 weeks, am I eligible for a discount? No. A discount will not be given for a vial used at a faster pace than prescribed.
• Do I have to come to the clinic to pick up my drop vial? No. When reordering, you have the option to receive your vial by mail for only $3.
• Can I make payments on drops if my insurance will not cover them? Yes. Patients may set up a payment plan by contacting our office.

Do I continue to take my allergy medications while on immunotherapy? Yes. While the goal is to reduce the need for allergy medications, you should continue to take your medications as prescribed until your provider tells you to stop.

COST OF IMMUNOTHERAPY
Immunotherapy is often covered by health insurance. We will submit your claim for allergy drop therapy or shot therapy on your behalf. For exact coverage, contact your insurance provider and use the following codes:

Single Injection
Weekly ............................... 95115

Shot Vial Preparation
Approximately every 10 weeks............. 95165

Shot Vial Safety Test
(1X)................................. 95024

Drop Vial Preparation
Approximately every 16 weeks............. 95199

Drop Training and Safety Education
(1X)................................. 99211
ALLERGY TREATMENT ROADMAP

FOLLOW THESE STEPS FOR SUCCESS!

ALLERGY SYMPTOMS

ALLERGY EVALUATION

DIAGNOSIS, TESTING AND TREATMENT OPTIONS

FOLLOW SCIT, SLIT MEDICATION TREATMENT PLAN AS PRESCRIBED

SCHEDULE 6-MONTH FOLLOW-UP AFTER TREATMENT BEGINS

SCHEDULE ANNUAL FOLLOW-UP UNTIL COURSE OF TREATMENT ENDS

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