

FOOD ALLERGY TESTS

FOOD CHALLENGE

A food challenge test is conducted in the doctor's office and serves as the "gold standard" to identify food allergies. A small amount of a particular item is eaten by the patient and any reaction is noted. Because severe allergic reactions may occur, it is important to conduct the test under the care of a physician in the event that immediate treatment is required. Patients are often advised not to eat the foods thought to trigger allergic reactions prior to the food challenge test, and not to take antihistamines which can influence the outcome.

SKIN ALLERGY TEST

In this test, a small amount of a purified substance is put on the patient's skin by pricking the skin, injecting a small amount of the substance into the skin, or placing a patch on the skin. This test measures IgE immune response to various items. A red wheal on the skin indicates an allergic reaction. While no preparation is needed for the test, medications like antihistamines, antidepressants and antacids may affect the results. Having a rash may also affect the skin allergy test.



IGE BLOOD TEST

This is a serum blood test to measure the IgE response to particular compounds. A blood sample is obtained and the blood is mixed with the compound. This test is not affected by antihistamines or rash and there is no concern for serious allergic reaction since it is conducted in a test tube and not in the patient. Negative results may not always be accurate, and "false positives" are more common. Further testing and advice of a skilled physician are often required to confirm an allergy (see FDA warning).

IGG BLOOD TEST

Unlike a food allergy which often involves a fairly rapid response, food sensitivity is usually related to a delayed reaction to foods with broadly interpreted negative outcomes. Many of the allergy test kits available are measuring food sensitivity through a different immunoglobulin – IgG – and reactions to a particular food is labeled as a food sensitivity at a particular threshold. However, the body naturally produces IgG to foods that are eaten so the test may just reflect exposure, not sensitivity. IgG test results also do not relate to diagnosed food allergies. American, Canadian and European societies of allergists all have position papers against the use of IgG tests to diagnose food allergies (see Further reading). A number of major newspaper articles discuss the problems with the use or over interpretation of IgG testing (see News articles). Of particular concern is its use in children, who may be misdiagnosed as having allergies to particular foods that are then removed from their diets, possibly leading to poor nutrition.

Is IgG testing all bad? Such tests are often used by alternative medicine practitioners as well as general practitioners. They may feel that the IgG test is useful for narrowing the list of potentially problematic foods prior to beginning an elimination diet – usually for patients who did not find satisfaction from the traditional IgE allergy tests.

ALCAT WORLDWIDE		Food Sensitivity Test Results		Patient Name: SAMPLE RESULT	Test Date: 12 Mar 2008
				Healthcare Provider: JOHN SALERNO, DO	File #: 40718 (202)
Severe Intolerance BASS CAULIFLOWER CORN NUTMEG ORANGE PLUM	Moderate Intolerance BUCKWHEAT CHERRY CHICK PEA CHICKEN FLAXSEED GINGER MUSHROOM	Mild Intolerance ANCHOVY* AVOCADO* BEET* CASHEW* CAYENNE PEPPER COCOA* CRAB* CRANBERRY* DUCK* EGG YOLK* GOAT'S MILK* LAMB* LEEK* LIME* SESAME* WALNUT*	Acceptable Foods VEGETABLES ACORN SQUASH BOK CHOY GARBOT EGGPLANT GREEN PEA KALE LIMA BEAN OKRA RADISH SPINACH SWISS CHARD WHITE POTATO ARTICHOKE BROCCOLI CELERY ENDIVE GREEN PEPPER KELP MUNG BEAN ONION RHUBARB SQUASH (Yellow) TOMATO ZUCCHINI ASPARAGUS BRUSSEL SPROUTS CHICORY FAVA BEAN ICEBURG LETTUCE KIDNEY BEAN MUSTARD ONION PARSNIP ROMAINE LETTUCE STRING BEAN TURNIP BLACK-EYED PEA CABBAGE CUCUMBER FENNEL JALAPENO PEPPER LENTIL BEAN NAVY BEAN PINTO BEAN SOYBEAN SWEET POTATO WATERCRESS		
			FRUITS APPLE BLACKBERRY FIG KIWI OLIVE PINEAPPLE STRAWBERRY APRICOT BLUEBERRY GRAPE LEMON PAPAIA POMEGRANATE WATERMELON BANANA CANTALOUPE GRAPEFRUIT MANGO PEACH PUMPKIN BLACK CURRANT DATE HONEYDEW (MIL) NECTARINE PEAR RASPBERRY		
			MEAT BEEF QUAIL VENISON COW'S MILK LIVER (BEEF) RABBIT EGG WHITE SHEEP'S MILK PHEASANT TURKEY PORK VEAL		
			DAIRY CATFISH FLOUNDER LOBSTER SALMON SNAPPER TROUT CLAM HADDOCK MACKEREL SARDINE SOLE TUNA CODFISH HALIBUT MUSSEL SCALLOP SQUID WHITEFISH CRAYFISH HERBING OYSTER SHRIMP SWORDFISH		
GRAINS MILLET TAPIOCA QUINOA RICE SPELT					
HERBS / SPICES ANISE SEED CARDAMOM CORIANDER LIQUORICE PARSLEY TARRAGON BASIL CHILI PEPPER CUMIN MINT ROSEMARY THYME BAY LEAF CINNAMON CURRY POWDER OREGANO SAFFRON TURMERIC BLACK PEPPER CLOVE DILL PAPRIKA SAGE					
NUTS/ OILS AND MISC. FOODS ALMOND BRAZIL NUT CAROB COTTONSEED HONEY PEANUT PSYLLIUM BAKER'S YEAST BREWER'S YEAST CHAMOMILE FRICTOSE HOPS PECAN SAFFLOWER BEET SUGAR CANE SUGAR COCONUT GARLIC MACADAMIA PINE NUT SUNFLOWER BLOKGREEN TEA CARAWAY COFFEE HAZELNUT MAPLE SUGAR PISTACHIO VANILLA					
Candida You have no reaction to Candida Albicans.					
Gluten / Gliadin You have no reaction to Gliadin and moderate reaction to Gluten, avoid these foods: BARLEY MALT OAT RYE WHEAT					
Casein / Whey You have no reaction to Casein or Whey.					
Red indicates a severe intolerance and these items should be avoided for a minimum of 6 months Orange indicates a moderate intolerance and these items should be avoided for a minimum of 3-6 months Yellow indicates a mild intolerance and these foods should be avoided if possible Green indicates acceptable foods / no reaction					

OTHER SCIENTIFICALLY UNPROVEN TESTS

There are a number of other food allergy tests that have not been studied or validated scientifically. Their use may be considered inappropriate or misleading by physicians and potential allergens should certainly be followed up by validated methods. A few of the currently unproven tests are Leucocyte cytotoxic test (observing changes in the shape of white blood cells following exposure to a potential allergan), applied kinesiology (observing muscle weakness), and VEGA or electrodermal testing (measuring changes in electrical resistance on the skin).