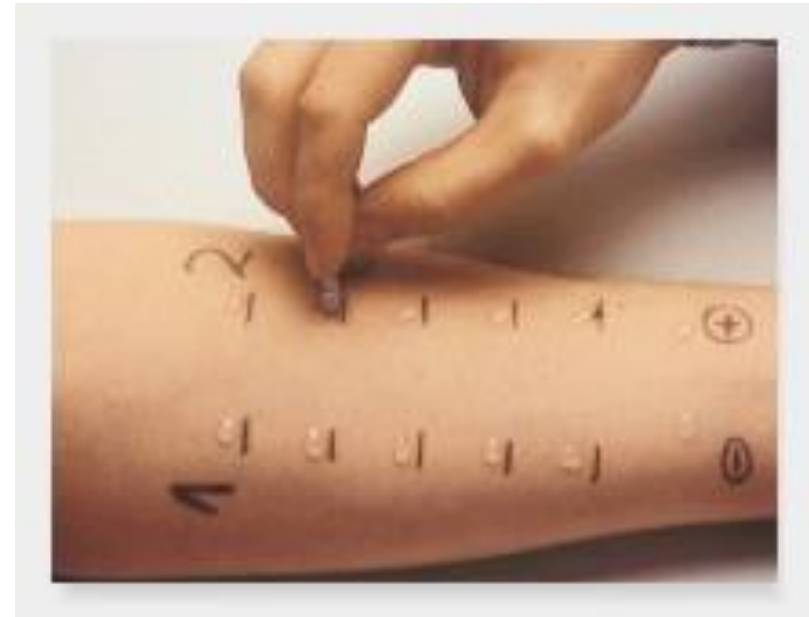


Skin prick testing is affected by the use of antihistamines or steroid tablets. If you are able to, then the antihistamines should be stopped at least FIVE days before the testing.

Skin prick testing or blood tests (RAST) are only useful in identifying type 1 immediate reactions. In delayed reactions such as contact dermatitis or conditions such as eczema other testing or a temporary exclusion of the allergen would be more appropriate.



Skin Prick Testing

During your allergy clinic appointment a detailed history will be taken and where appropriate skin prick testing may be undertaken. This leaflet outlines the process involved.

What is allergy?

An allergy develops when the body's immune system over reacts to a substance that is not normally harmful e.g grass pollen. The chemicals produced during an allergic reaction can cause unpleasant symptoms which can be either mild or more severe resulting in anaphylaxis.

What is a skin prick test?

It is a type of allergy test. A drop of the suspected substance (allergen) causing the reaction is placed on your skin. In some instances the test is done using juice from fresh fruit or milk. This is called prick to prick testing.

The testing is usually done on the forearm but if this area is affected by eczema it can be done on the back or thigh. The area will be labelled with a pen for each allergen.

The skin is pricked with the solution using a small metal lancet. The skin is then dabbed. It takes 15 minutes to get the result.

Will it hurt?

The test itself involves a series of pricks and although this can be uncomfortable there are **no** needles! Skin prick tests are safe tests.

How long will it take?

Skin prick testing takes 15 minutes. At the end of the test any raised areas (wheals) are measured and the results are recorded.

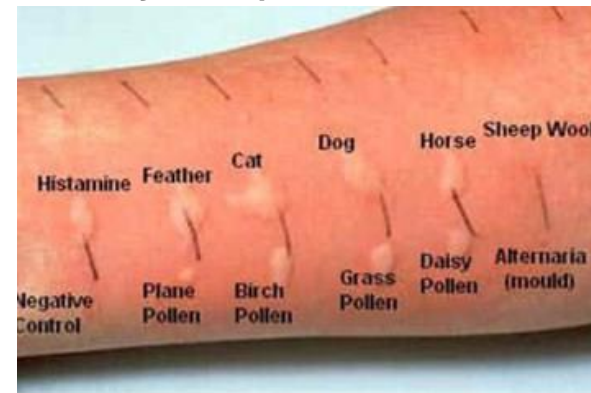
Is skin prick testing accurate?

All tests have their limitations. Any allergy tests need to be interpreted alongside a good history and the result can support a clinical diagnosis.

Skin prick tests may be avoided in patients with widespread eczema or those taking regular antihistamines or steroid tablets. Sometimes blood testing is done as an alternative.

What happens after the test?

After the test there may be some minor local irritation which usually settles on its own within 30-45 minutes. Washing the area may be helpful.



Skin Allergy Test