

## **What To Expect During Your Allergy Test**

Once your doctor has determined that you would benefit from allergy testing a separate date is scheduled for your skin testing. In order to get safe and accurate results from skin testing several things are needed:

1. Your body needs to be able to react to histamine – this means certain medications must be stopped (see sheet of “medications to stop”). It is important to remember that many over the counter cold and sleep remedies have anti-histamines in them such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) which should not be used the week prior to testing.
2. Your skin must be relatively healthy. Although not dangerous another condition, dermatographism when the skin forms wheals in response to any pressure. Typically people can draw with their finger on the skin and be able to read it.
3. No previously severe anaphylactic episodes.
4. If you have asthma this should be reasonably well controlled at the time of testing.

## **How is Allergy Skin Testing Performed?**

Small amounts of substances which people are frequently allergic to called “allergens” are introduced just below the surface of the skin. This is done on the forearms or back. There is minimal discomfort, much less than a shot, and many antigens can be placed all at once. There are also negative and positive controls placed to make sure that the testing is reliable. If you are allergic to a substance being tested the antigen will bind to antibodies on mast cells in the skin causing histamine to be released. A wheal (hive) will develop, the surrounding area will turn red and itch. The size of the wheal is measured and used to determine how allergic you are to that antigen 15 minutes after it is placed on the skin. Very rarely systemic reactions can occur from this. A steroid cream is placed over the area to calm the itching and swelling. Your doctor will discuss the results with you and determine if any additional testing is needed along with treatment options based on the testing.