

Living Better with Allergies

Not All Allergy Tests are Equal

The evaluation of allergies is mostly obtained through history, and a board-certified allergist and immunologist, has been trained to obtain the right clinical history to be able to discern the difference between the right allergy test to be used, based that patient's information. Unfortunately, with the rise of allergies in the United States, there is also a rise of self-proclaimed allergist who are making unthoughtful and irresponsible recommendations to patients about how to care for their allergies. Therefore, it is important that only a board-certified allergist and immunologist, evaluate and treat these patients, as they are trained in properly and responsibly caring for patients and their allergies. As a patient, it is your right to ask your provider for these credentials, and if this is not the case, reconsider the visit. Take patient A-for example- One day, she came to me as an initial visit, and she had lost over 20 pounds for 3 months, because she was told she was allergic to more than 20 foods. Her baseline weight was 128 lbs. and she was down to 108 lbs. Of note, she did not see a board-certified allergist and immunologist. She was miserable as she had to give up some of the foods that she loved, and the unfortunate part was that she was still symptomatic. When we did allergy testing, she had no evidence of food sensitization, therefore, I was able to successfully introduce most of these foods little by little. This is one of the frequent types of patients that we encounter, that has been affected by careless recommendations, where food allergy was not the issue. Allergy tests are important in the evaluation of a patient with a history of allergies, however, the results must be interpreted in the setting of the clinical history. Also, not all tests are equal and some allergy tests test measure IgE sensitization or preformed antibodies to a particular food protein, but some that are commercially available test for IgG which only test to previous food exposure, not food sensitization. Most IgG tests will give positive results to many foods, because it's a sign of gut exposure and memory to the food protein, but it does not equal reactivity, hence, the importance of a board-certified allergist and immunologist in interpreting the results. In the case of food allergies- there is a risk in having patient avoid foods unnecessarily, particularly, if they had pre-formed antibodies against a food already as if they reintroduce that food in the future, they can have serious symptoms including a severe allergic reaction. Food allergy is becoming more common and it has to be evaluated carefully and thoughtfully. If you have food allergies, we can help, in the near future, we will begin to offer oral immunotherapy for various food allergies. For more tips and tricks, please visit us at please contact us at Asthma and Allergy Clinic at asthmaandallergyva.com, follow us on facebook at facebook.com/AsthmaAllergyDocs or call us to schedule an appointment at The Asthma and Allergy Clinic of Dr. Sweeney and Palacios-Kibler 757.483.4150 or 757.539.7771