

The Oklahoma Institute of Allergy and Asthma

ALLERGY TESTING

Percutaneous (prick) testing, intradermal testing and Immunocap testing are the methods used to determine what allergens people are allergic to.

Percutaneous or prick testing is when the suspecting allergens are placed on the patients back and the skin is lightly scratched. After 15 minutes, the skin is checked for a local reaction. The severity of the allergy is determined by the size of the reaction.

Intradermal testing is generally performed if all or certain parts of the Percutaneous test is negative. This process involves injecting a small amount of allergens under the first layer of the skin. As with Percutaneous testing, the skin is checked after 15 minutes.

Immunocap testing is performed at a laboratory. With this process, a blood sample is sent to a laboratory and checked to see if the patient is making any allergen-specific antibodies. This type of testing is performed when a person has a skin condition or on medication which interferes with skin testing.

Rapid desensitization immunotherapy (RUSH): A new treatment for allergies

Allergy medications can be quite helpful, but they can be expensive and inconvenient when needing them long term. Often times, as soon as medications are stopped, the symptoms return; however, with immunotherapy the immune system is “naturally” modified to become tolerant to environmental allergens.

There are two common problems with standard immunotherapy, commonly known as “allergy shots”. First, many allergists fail to use high enough doses to achieve an adequate response. Secondly, standard immunotherapy can take 6 to 12 months before patients start to see improvement in their symptoms. This is often inconvenient and too long for many patients to endure. For this reason, many patients are simply not willing to make the long-term time commitment. As a result, many patients who could get relief from immunotherapy, never receive the benefits.

A new treatment called “rapid desensitization immunotherapy” works well because it improves upon standard immunotherapy. With “rapid desensitization immunotherapy”, the maintenance or “effective” shot dose can be achieved in one day instead of 9- 12 months. In the three years that Dr. Darter has been performing this procedure, she has helped hundred’s of patients get fast control of their allergies with this new treatment.

Dr. Darter is the only board-certified allergist in Oklahoma with formal training and experience performing “rapid desensitization immunotherapy”. Dr. Darter was one of the researchers at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas involved with clinical studies with this new allergy treatment. “This can be an effective therapy for nasal and eye allergies, allergic asthma, chronic sinus infections and ear infections, and chronic headaches. This procedure is the closest thing to a “quick fix” for allergies, currently available.”

Patients no longer have to continue suffering for months with allergy symptoms while waiting for standard “allergy shots” to start working. Most patients don’t have the time or patience to wait this long for relief. “Rapid desensitization immunotherapy” often results in long-term improvement in symptoms by “fooling” the allergic part of the immune system so that aflergens (pollens, molds, pet danders, dust mites) are ignored, and therefore, may offer a cure for some patients with allergies.

