

Allergen skin testing is a method which uses allergen extracts to diagnose respiratory allergies such as hayfever and asthma, allergic skin conditions such as dermatitis, and food allergies such as egg milk and peanut.

The technique involves pricking a small amount of allergen extract into the skin, using a variety of methods and instruments.

The performance of the prick test may cause discomfort.

### **Expected effects**

- Itchy lumps like a mosquito bite or hive which can be uncomfortable, and which may persist for minutes to hours
- Redness of the surrounding area

### **Side-effects**

- Syncope/fainting
- Generalised hive like rash.
- Wheezing or asthma
- Anaphylaxis, which is a severe generalised allergic reaction, but this is rare.

### **Alternatives to skin testing for the diagnosis of allergy**

There are blood tests to allergen extracts called a RAST, which may be more sensitive for some allergens. e.g. dog

There are blood tests to allergen components (molecules) which can provide more detailed information about the nature of the allergen than the extract. e.g. peanut.

RAST and component testing have no allergic risk.