

Information Resources

Information Resources

American College of Allergy, Asthma,
and Immunology
800 E. Northwest Highway, Suite 1080
Palatine, IL 60067
1-800-842-7777
<http://allergy.mcg.edu>

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma
& Immunology
611 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202
Phone: 414-272-6071
Fax: 414-272-6070
<http://www.aaaai.org>

The Food Allergy Network
10400 Eaton Place, Suite 107
Fairfax, VA 22030
Phone: 703-691-3179
Fax: 703-691-2713
Email: fan@worldweb.net
<http://www.foodallergy.org>

National Asthma Education Program
Information Center
P.O. Box 30105
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
301-251-1222

Allergy and Asthma Network/
Mothers of Asthmatics, Inc.
3554 Chain Bridge Road, Suite 200
Fairfax, VA 22030
1-800-878-4403
<http://www.podi.com/health/aanma>

Asthma and Allergy Foundation
of America
1125 15th Street NW, Suite 502
Washington, DC 20005
1-800-7-ASTHMA
<http://www.aafa.org>

American Lung Association
American Thoracic Society
1740 Broadway
New York, NY 10019-4374
1-800-LUNG USA
<http://www.lungusa.org>

JAMA Asthma Information Center
American Medical Association
515 N. State Street
Chicago, IL 60610
<http://www.ama-assn.org/asthma>

A Visit to the Allergist

Everyone has at least one "friend" who can tell you of the horrors involved in a visit to the allergist. Every day we deal with children (and adults) who are in our office only because their symptoms are no longer tolerable and are interfering with the quality of their daily lives. This visit has been postponed as long as possible because the patient or the parent is sure that allergy testing is cruel and unjust punishment for a wayward immune system. Let's lay those unfounded rumors to rest.

Question at First Call

Start asking questions when you call to schedule your first visit. Ask about the doctor's qualifications, fees, and testing procedures. Only you can decide how much preparation to give your child regarding what to expect. Don't ask the office to make the decision for you. Seeing any new doctor may produce anxiety so it's a good idea to forgo stories of "shots and needles". Just give the child the general idea, such as, "The doctor and nurse will ask us questions about the problems you been having (sneezing, wheezing, etc.), examine your eyes, ears, nose, throat, chest, etc., and then decide what else needs to be done. I'll make sure everything is explained to us before they do anything."

All Parties Share Information

Encourage your child to be an active participant in giving information to the doctor and nurse; it's good experience for the future. The more information your child can share the more he or she will feel a part of the visit. Besides it's their body. You may be surprised to learn that the medicine your child is taking makes him feel nervous or tired, etc. This information is important for the doctor and nurse to know.

Post Exam Diagnosis

After the exam, the doctor will decide what is required next. If your child is suspected of having asthma, a spirometry test may be ordered. This is a test which requires your child to blow into a machine that measures several aspects of pulmonary function and helps the doctor to determine the current status of his/her asthma. The nurse will explain the procedure. It does not hurt! Your child may be asked to exercise if there's a question about exercise-induced asthma. It's best to wear tennis shoes to the visit if you think this may be necessary. If an exercise test is done, your child will need to repeat the spirometry to compare "before and after" test results.

Allergy Testing

Allergy testing will quite likely be next. This is a simple procedure which sounds worse than it actually is. The test is usually done on the patient's back. The nurse will place drops on the patient's back and then make a small prick on each drop. No "blood letting" here; all we're doing is moving the top layers of skin to let the antigen (what you may be allergic to) in. If your child is allergic to that specific substance he will develop a "wheal and flare" reaction much like a mosquito bite. While the pricks can be uncomfortable, most children complain more about the itching they experience. The most common remark we hear after performing an allergy test is, "Is that all?"

Some doctors do testing on the arm. These tests are a little more uncomfortable because they are done between the layers of skin and involve needles, a scary thing for small children. However, the test is done quickly and is over in a matter of minutes. Again a wheal and flare reaction will indicate positive reactions. After the testing is complete the doctor will meet with you again and discuss the test results and decide if more testing is indicated. When all the testing is complete, the doctor will meet with you to help decide on a treatment plan for you or your child. Contrary to popular belief, allergy injections are not recommended at first except for those who are so allergic that medications and environmental controls cannot be effective. Blood testing is not the first choice for testing due to the fact that results are generally not the most reliable. This form of testing is also rather expensive and insurance companies hesitate to cover the expense. Allergy testing can be performed on young children. There is no minimum age restriction for testing. The decision whether or not to test is based on the severity of symptoms. The point of allergy testing is to identify allergens so that they can be avoided in an attempt to better control your child's or your allergies and asthma.

So go ahead and make that appointment. It's really nothing like the stories you've heard!

Adapted from the M.A. Report, December 1991

OFFICE HOURS

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|---|----------------------|
| Monday | 9:00 am - 5:00 pm |
| Tuesday | 9:00 am - 5:00 pm |
| Wednesday | Closed |
| Thursday | 9:00 am - 5:00 pm |
| Friday | 9:00 am - 5:00 pm |
| Saturday (1 st & 3 rd) | 9:00 am - 12:00 noon |