ValleyHealth

Allergy Testing: What's Causing Your Symptoms?

When Symptoms May Point to Allergies

Allergies can cause symptoms that feel a lot like a cold or sinus problem. A runny nose and itchy, watery eyes are common signs that allergies may be involved.

Other allergy symptoms include:

- Nasal drainage
- Postnasal drip
- Congestion
- Pressure headaches
- Trouble breathing through the nose

In areas with moisture, trees, and pollen, seasonal allergies can be especially common. Some people notice symptoms during certain seasons, while others feel bad year-round because of triggers like mold, pets, or dust. If symptoms keep returning or never fully clear, allergy testing may help identify what is causing them.

Medications Are Often the First Step

Before allergy testing, many providers recommend trying medication first. Antihistamines may help with itchy eyes, watery eyes, and a runny nose.

Nasal sprays can work well for drainage and congestion because they act locally in the nose. If these treatments are not helping enough, your provider may discuss allergy testing as a next step.

How Allergy Testing Works

Allergy testing is often done on the skin of the back or shoulder area. Small skin pricks introduce tiny amounts of substances that may trigger an allergic reaction.

The test is done in a pattern, with each spot matched to a specific allergen. After the allergens are applied, the care team watches for redness or swelling. The size of the reaction helps show how strongly your body responds to that allergen.

VALLEYHEALTH

Allergy Testing: What's Causing Your Symptoms?

What Results Can Show

Allergy test results are usually available the same day because skin reactions happen quickly. Results may show mild reactions to some allergens and stronger reactions to others.

For example, someone may react mildly to pollen but more strongly to cats, dogs, or mold. Knowing these details helps your provider understand what may be causing your symptoms and how severe the reaction may be.

What Allergy Testing Helps Explain

Allergies happen when the immune system reacts too strongly to something that is not truly dangerous. For example, tree pollen may cause the body to make extra mucus in an effort to flush it out.

Allergy testing helps identify which triggers are causing that response. From there, your provider can build a treatment plan that may include medication changes, avoidance strategies, or allergy immunotherapy.

Allergy Shots and Desensitization

If medications have not worked well, allergy shots may be an option. This treatment is also called desensitization or allergy immunotherapy.

With allergy shots, small amounts of the allergen are given regularly, often weekly or every other week. Over time, the dose is slowly increased so the immune system can learn not to overreact. Treatment can take time, but many people who complete it feel better and need less medication.

Allergy symptoms can make daily life uncomfortable, especially when you are not sure what is causing them. Valley Health can help identify allergy triggers and guide a treatment plan that fits your symptoms.

To learn more or schedule a visit, contact Valley Health or visit valleyhealth.org.