

Policy for withholding antihistamines (AH's) before allergy skin testing

Antihistamines (AH's) block the histamine reaction, and therefore, when you or child are taking them, you or your child's allergy testing can be negative when it would otherwise be positive.

Because of this, **AH's should be stopped before coming in for an allergy evaluation** (i.e. allergy skin testing). It is best that this be done 5 days before your visit. A 5 day withhold is always the most assured way of making sure your skin testing is not affected by a medication.

Some AH's are different, however, than others, and may not require the full 5 days of withhold. It is still best to wait the five days, but if this is not possible (e.g. you are getting quickly scheduled for an office visit and there is not enough time to do the withhold, or you would not be able to tolerate it if you were to have to stay off AH's for the full five days), the following are exceptions to the rule:

1. Nasal spray AH's (e.g. Astelin, Patanase, Dymista) require only 2 days withhold.
2. Eye drop AH's (e.g. Patanol, Pataday, Bepreve, Optivar, Elestat, Zaditor) require only 2 days withhold.
2. Benadryl (also known as diphenhydramine - a very common AH), needs to be withheld for only 2 days.

See attached list for the names of medications (OTC and prescription) that contain AH's (note: this is not a complete list. If you are unsure of any medication you are on having an antihistamine property, call the pharmacy, and ask).

There are some additional meds which can suppress the histamine reaction, that need to be withheld, which include:

- Montelukast (Singulair) – hold for 1 day.
- Benzodiazepines (eg. lorazepam (Ativan); clonazepam (Klonopin); diazepam (Valium); These are anti-anxiety/mild sedative medications. Avoid for 5 to 7 days before testing, **DO THIS ONLY IF YOU ARE USING THEM OCCASSIONALLY, AND ARE ABLE TO SAFELY DO THIS. IF YOU ARE USING THEM REGULARLY, DO NOT WITHDRAW.**
- Dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) – a type of AH medication used for motion sickness. Need to avoid for 5 days before visit.
- Many OTC sleeping aids (e.g. Sominex, Nyquil) contain an antihistamine, and need to be withheld for 5 days before allergy testing.
- Certain psychiatric (particularly tricyclic antidepressants; examples: doxepin (Sinequan), imipramine (Tofranil)) and certain neurological medications have the potential of blocking allergy testing. However, do not come off these medications if you are using them regularly. Instead, make sure you tell the doctor you are on them when you see him or her at your office visit.

Final note: if you are unable to avoid taking your AH before your visit when allergy testing is likely – that's okay. We don't want to create misery or jeopardize your health in following this policy. The physician will discuss with you at your office visit what needs to be done to be able to carry out allergy testing under these circumstances.