Diagnosing Allergy



Introduction

There is a wide array of diagnostic modalities available

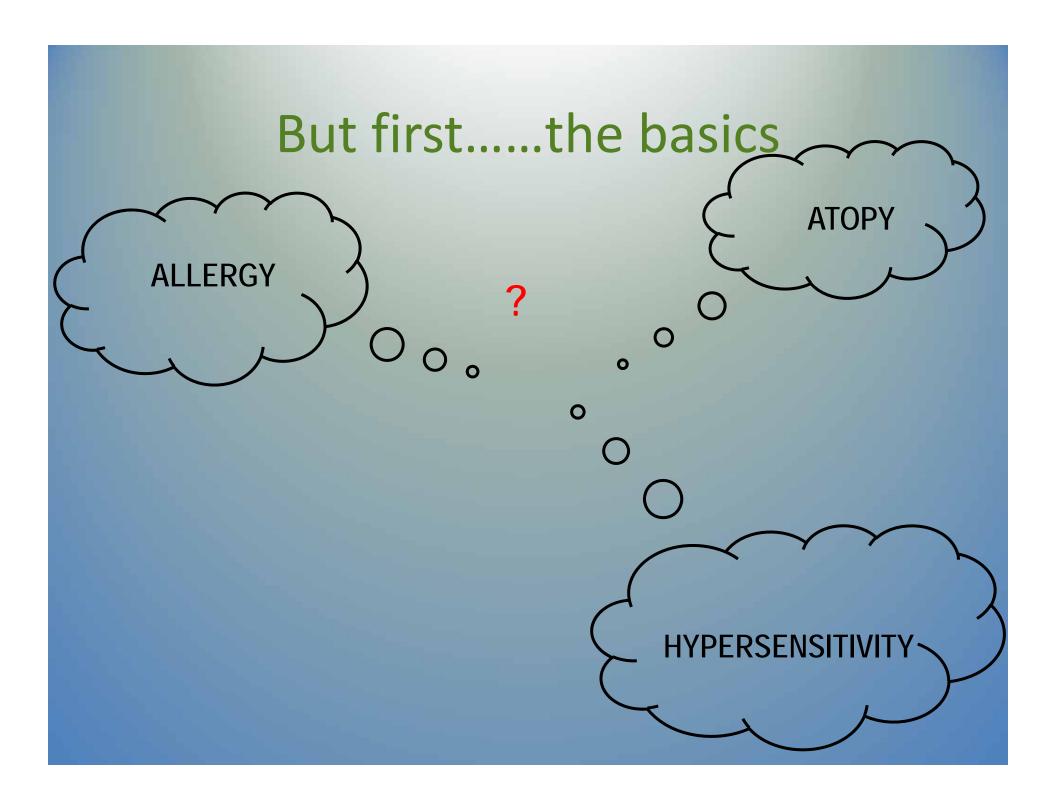
 Skin tests are of paramount importance especially for IgE mediated and delayed allergy

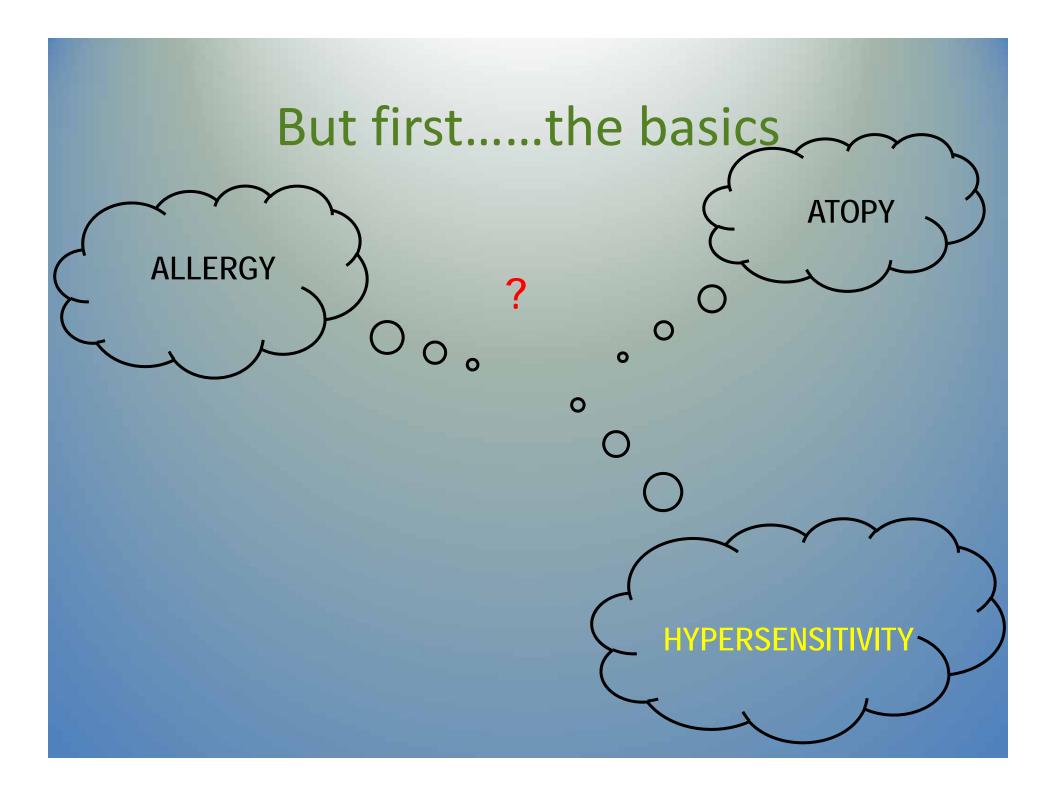
 As immunologic diagnostic technology advances, in-vitro tests have assumed greater significance

Introduction

 Lymphocyte functional assays are also recently being used for confirmation of humoral/cellmediated conditions as well as delayed hypersensitivity reactions

- An increase in eosinophils and their products often occurs in the immediate- and late- phase responses
- Basophil activity can be assessed by the basophil activation test

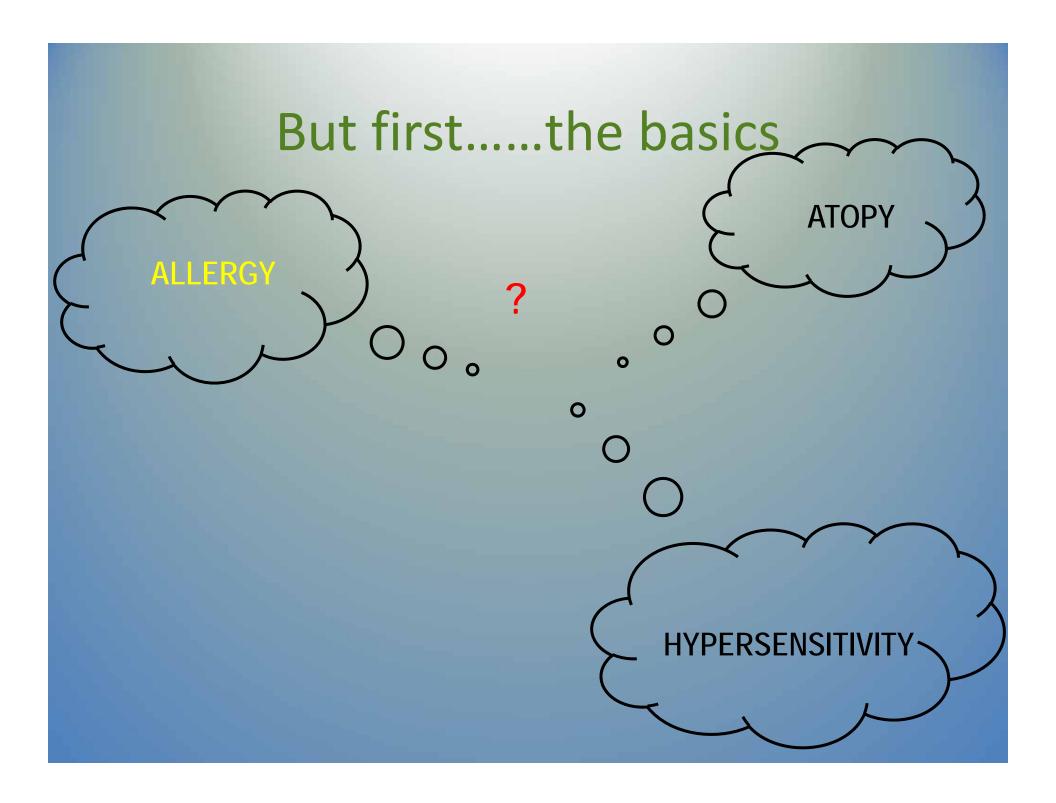




Definitions

Hypersensitivity

 Objectively reproducible symptoms or signs initiated by exposure to a defined stimulus at a dose tolerated by normal persons



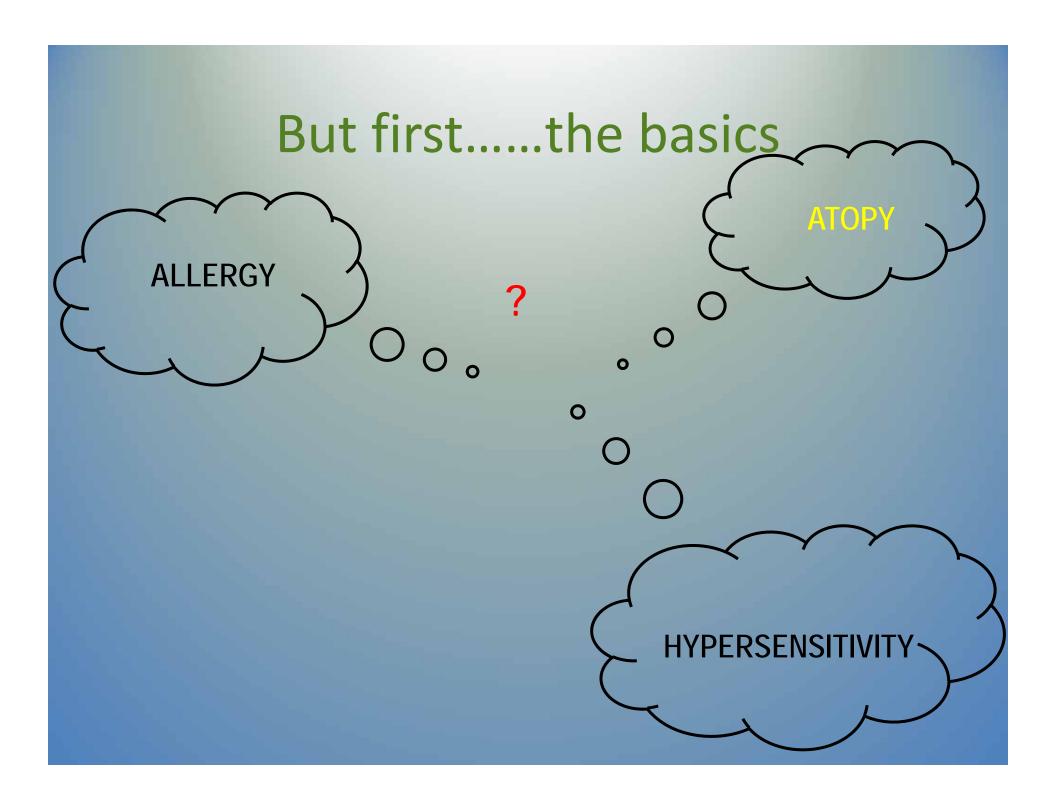
Definitions

Allergy

 A hypersensitivity reaction that is mediated by the immune system

The reaction can be antibody- or cell-mediated

Most often the antibody responsible for the reaction is IgE



Definitions

Atopy

 A familial/personal tendency to become sensitised and produce IgE antibodies in response to ordinary exposure to allergens

 As a result, these individuals may develop the typical symptoms of asthma, allergic rhinitis or atopic eczema

Diagnosis

Principles

History

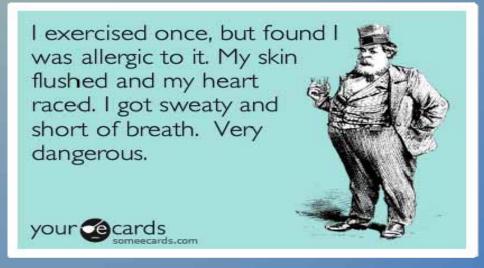
Physical examination

Special investigations

History

 In no other medical disease is history more important

Without a thorough history one cannot appropriately investigate



History

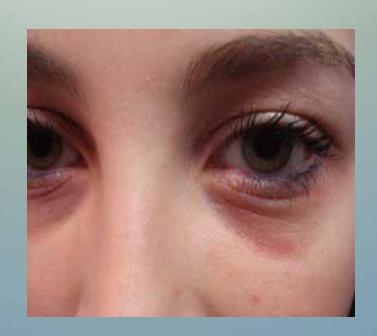
- Main complaint
- Age of onset
- Seasonality
- Time of onset
- Aggravating factors
- Relieving factors
- Family history of allergies
- Home/work/school environment
- Medications
- Dietary preferences
- Occupation/hobbies



General – Shiners, Dennie's lines, Nasal crease, Atopic eczema, Nutritional status

Systematic examination

Shiners



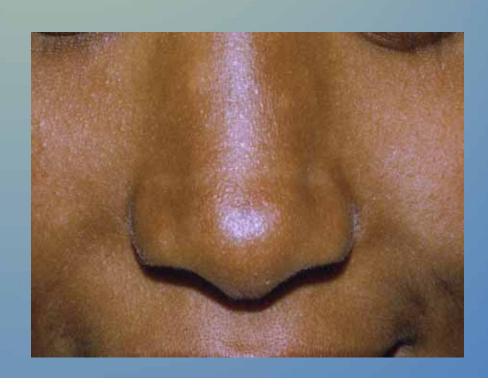
Dennie's lines



Nasal crease







Why should allergy tests be done?

- To identify and avoid trigger allergens
- To be able to provide relevant and effective therapy
- To be able to choose effective immunotherapy/ desensitisation which is the only disease-modifying therapy available for allergy
- To identify patients whose symptoms are not due to allergy and thus prevent unnecessary drug therapy/unnecessary allergen avoidance

Before ordering allergy tests, ask yourself.....

- Is the patient allergic?
- What are the clinically relevant allergens?
- Does the allergy contribute to the patient's symptoms?
- What is the suspected mechanism of allergy?

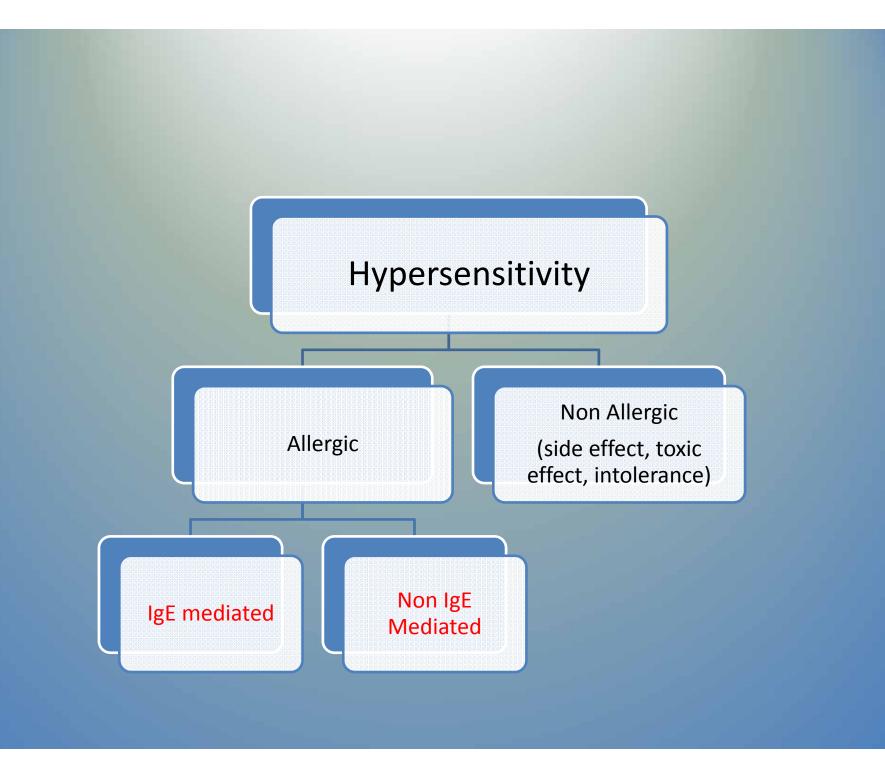
There are several different mechanisms of allergy

 As a result, there is a huge range of tests to diagnose these various mechanisms

 A negative test only excludes that particular mechanism of allergy, but not other types

 It is imperative to distinguish between allergic reactions that are mediated by the immune system vs non-allergic reactions such as intolerances, toxic effects and side effects

 Obviously we cannot do allergy testing for these reactions as they are not mediated by the immune system



Mechanisms

minutes, up to 2 hours after exposure to the allergen.

Classic symptoms include:

- Skin: itch, erythema, urticaria, angioedema
- Resp: rhinitis, cough, wheeze
- GIT: diarrhoea, vomiting
- Anaphylaxis

Mechanisms

- Non-IgE mediated reactions are mediated by other mechanisms that may include T-cells, basophils and eosinophils
- Symptoms may be immediate but are generally more delayed

Classic symptoms include:

eczema, urticaria, maculopapular rashes, GIT symptoms, rhinitis, respiratory and mucus membrane involvement

What tests are available?

In vivo

- Skin prick tests
- Patch tests
- Provocation tests

What tests are available?

In vitro

- Allergen specific IgE (ImmunoCAP®)
- ISAC
- Tryptase
- Basophil activation tests (flow-CAST)
- T-cell proliferation assays (MELISA)
- Nasal eosinophils

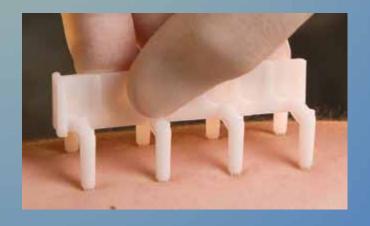
- First described by Dr Charles Blackley in 1867
- Reliable, safe and cost effective in diagnosing IgE-mediated allergy
- Optimal results depend on quality of the extracts and proficiency of the tester
- Useful for: foods, aeroallergens, a few drugs and chemicals

Technique

- Allergen drops are placed on the skin
- A lancet, with a shoulder to prevent excess penetration into the dermis, is then passed through the droplet at 90° to the skin
- Each lancet must be discarded after a single use

- Various devices may be used
- No clear-cut advantage





Drugs that may affect SPT results

- Antihistamines 1st gen stop for 3 days
 2nd gen up to 7 days
- Doxepin/Imipramine 6 days
- Ranitidine 1 day
- Methotrexate 5-7 days
- Repetitive/prolonged application of high dose topical steroids – 3 weeks

- Use volar forearm or back
- Space droplets 2-2.5cm apart



- Avoid areas of active dermatitis
- Earlier study reported smaller wheal sizes in children <2yrs; a more recent study demonstrated good reliability in infants



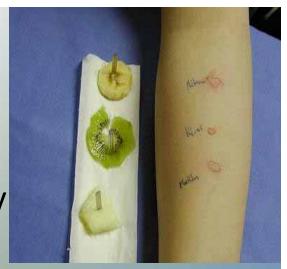
Extracts used should be of known composition and potency

 Standardised commercial extracts are available for most aeroallergens and some food allergens

The quality of the extract is important



Store extracts at <4° to maintain stability



- Always use a positive (histamine) and negative (glycerinated saline) control
- In some cases, SPTs done with fresh fruit/foods may be more helpful using the prick-prick method
- Perform only where resuscitation equipment is available
- Small, but definite risk of systemic reactions

Reading the results



- Peak reactivity is 15-20 minutes
- Wheal and flare is recorded in millimetres
- Qualitative scoring (1+ 4+ is no longer used)
- A positive result is a mean wheal diameter ≥3mm than the negative control

Interpreting the result

- A positive test indicates the presence of specific IgE antibody
- It does not indicate clinical allergy
- The diagnostic value lies in comparing the results to the history of symptoms given by the patient

Interpreting the result for inhalant allergy

Comparing SPT to nasal provocation challenges

- Sensitivity 85-87%
- Specificity 79-86%

Interpreting the result for food allergy

Comparing SPT to food challenge

 Sensitivity and specificity depends on age of child and type of food

Interpreting the result for food allergy

Allergen	95% PPV <2yr	95% PPV >2 yr
Cow's milk	6mm	>8mm
Egg	5mm	>7mm
Peanut	4mm	>8mm

PPV = positive predictive value

Ref: Sporik et al

Common aeroallergens in South Africa

- House dust mite (Der p 1 and Der f 1)
- Rye and Bermuda grass
- Aspergillus, alternaria, cladosporium
- Cat
- Dog

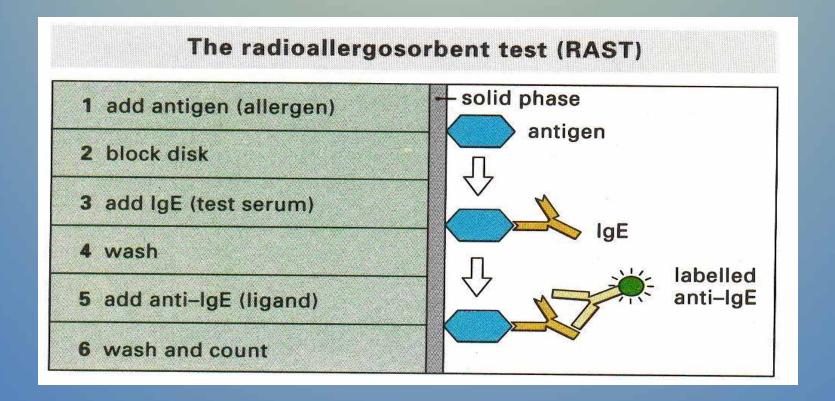


Others to consider

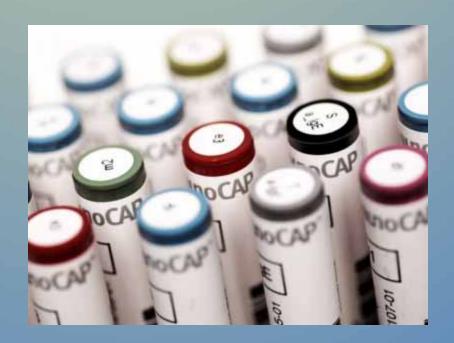
- Farming areas zea mayz pollen, horse,
 blomia tropicalis
- Health care worker latex, chlorhexidine
- Grain industry storage mites, wheat, rye
- Tree and weed pollens are regional



 First assay for specific IgE was reported in 1967 and was called the RAST



 Technical improvements have resulted in a uniform method of reporting IgE antibody results in quantitative kU/I



Interpreting the results

- As with SPT, a positive test indicates the presence of IgE antibody but not clinical allergy
- Interpretation requires correlation with history, physical examination and occasionally observation after exposure to the allergen concerned

Interpreting the results



- For inhalant allergens, a result of >0.35kU/l is considered positive
- Sensitivity 60-80% and specificity 90%
- For food allergy, >0.35 is also the cutoff but clinical reactivity is age dependent and interpretation is guided more by history

Interpreting the results for food allergy

IgE values at which there is a 95% chance of clinical reaction

Allergen	Child (kU/L)	<2yrs (kU/L)
Egg	7	2
Cow's milk	15	5
Peanut	14	
Fish	20	
Soy	30	
Wheat	26	

Sampson JACI 2001 (107) 891-896

SPT vs specific IgE

SPT	Specific IgE
Inexpensive	More expensive
Immediate results	Delayed results
Unable to perform if extensive skin disease/dermatographism	Not influenced by skin disease or dermatographism
Affected by many drugs	Not affected by drugs
Small risk of anaphylaxis	No risk of anaphylaxis
Limited range of allergens	Wide range of allergens
Technique dependent	Not technique dependent

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Multi-allergen IgE antibody screening assays

Used to rule allergy in or out

Phadiatop – screening test for inhalant allergy

Fx5 – screening test for food allergy

Multi-allergen IgE antibody screening assays

Phadiatop

- Reported as positive or negative
- Sensitivity 93%
- Specificity 89%
- A positive test indicates that the patient may be sensitive to any of house dust mites, grass pollens, tree and weed pollens, moulds, cat or dog dander
- A negative test means it is highly unlikely that the symptoms are due to IgE-mediated allergy

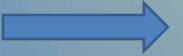
Multi-allergen IgE antibody screening assays

Fx5

A positive test indicates that the patient may be sensitive to any of:

- egg white
- cow's milk
- peanut
- wheat
- fish
- soya

 The identification of cross-reacting allergens (pan allergens) has led to a new concept in allergy diagnosis

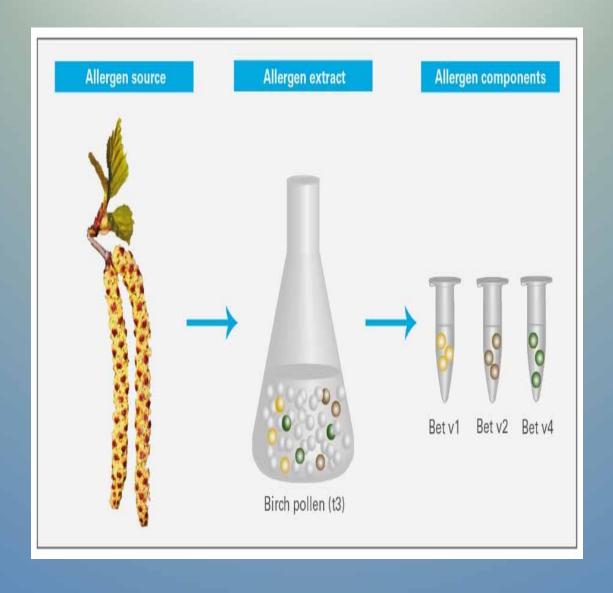


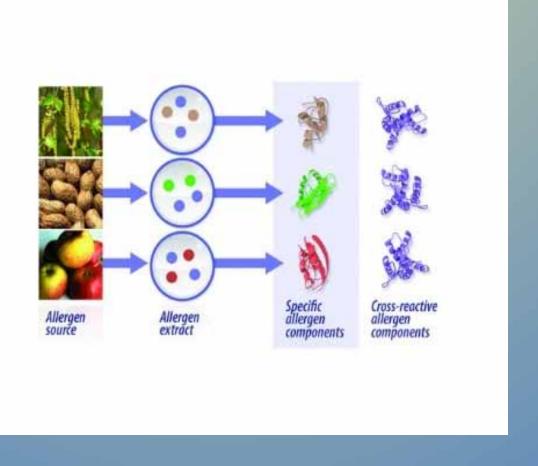
Component-resolved diagnostics

 Natural allergen sources contain many different proteins

Not all are allergenic

Some occur in many different foods and pollens





Panallergens include:

- CCD (cross-reacting carbohydrate determinants)
- Profilins
- PR-10 (Pathogenesis-related protein)
- Lipid transfer protein (LTP)
- Storage proteins

Provides additional diagnostic insight regarding

- Prediction of risk of severe reactions (risk assessment)
- Heat-stability/bio-degradability of certain allergens
- Which patients will best respond to a course of immunotherapy
- Prediction of cross reactivity

Risk assessment

- Certain components predict a higher risk of developing anaphylaxis
- The protein AraH2, of peanut origin, is such a protein
- Those sensitised to LTP or storage proteins have a higher risk of reaction than those sensitised to CCD
- Obvious clinical implications decreases the need for food challenges

Heat stability/lability

PR-10 proteins and profilins are heat sensitive

 Implication is that some allergic patients may be able to tolerate these foods in a cooked form

Selection of patients for immunotherapy

 Immunotherapy is more successful in patients who are sensitised to the specific components found in each vaccine

	CCD	PROFILIN	PR-10	LTP	STORAGE PROTEIN
Stability to heat/digesti on	Stable but still not usually clinically relevant	Sensitive May tolerate cooked food	Sensitive May tolerate cooked food	Stable React to cooked food	Very stable React to cooked food
Location	N/A	Throughout fruit	Mainly pulp	Mainly peel	Seed/nut/ke rnel
Severity of reaction	Usually no symptoms	None or mild localised	Usually mild, may be severe	Systemic and severe reactions	Severe systemic reactions
Symptoms	Usually none	None or oral allergy syndrome	OAS and systemic symptoms	Systemic	Severe systemic, anaphylaxis

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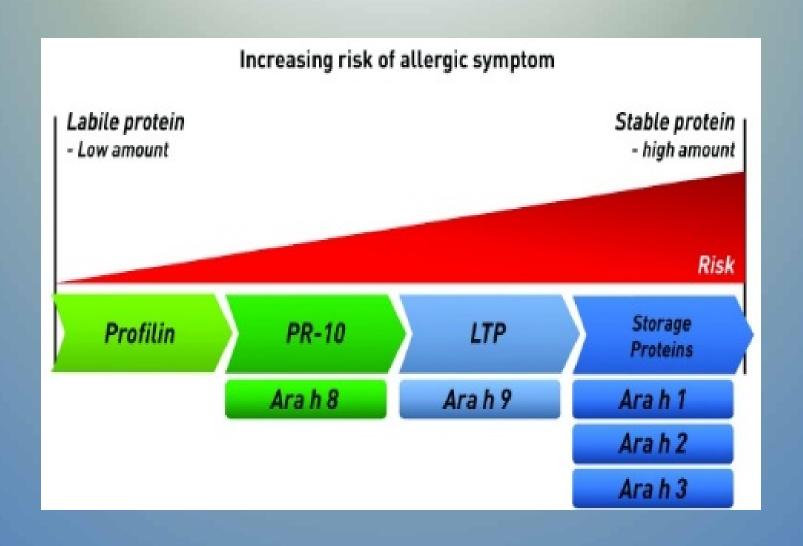
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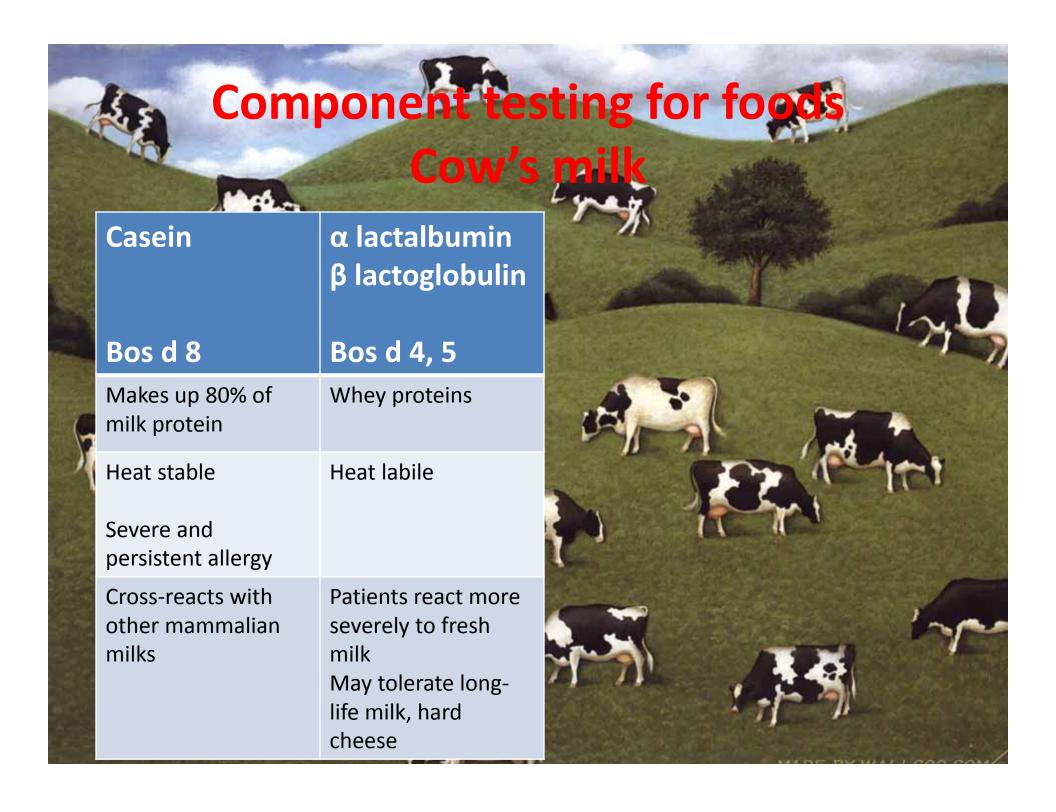
Risk assessment

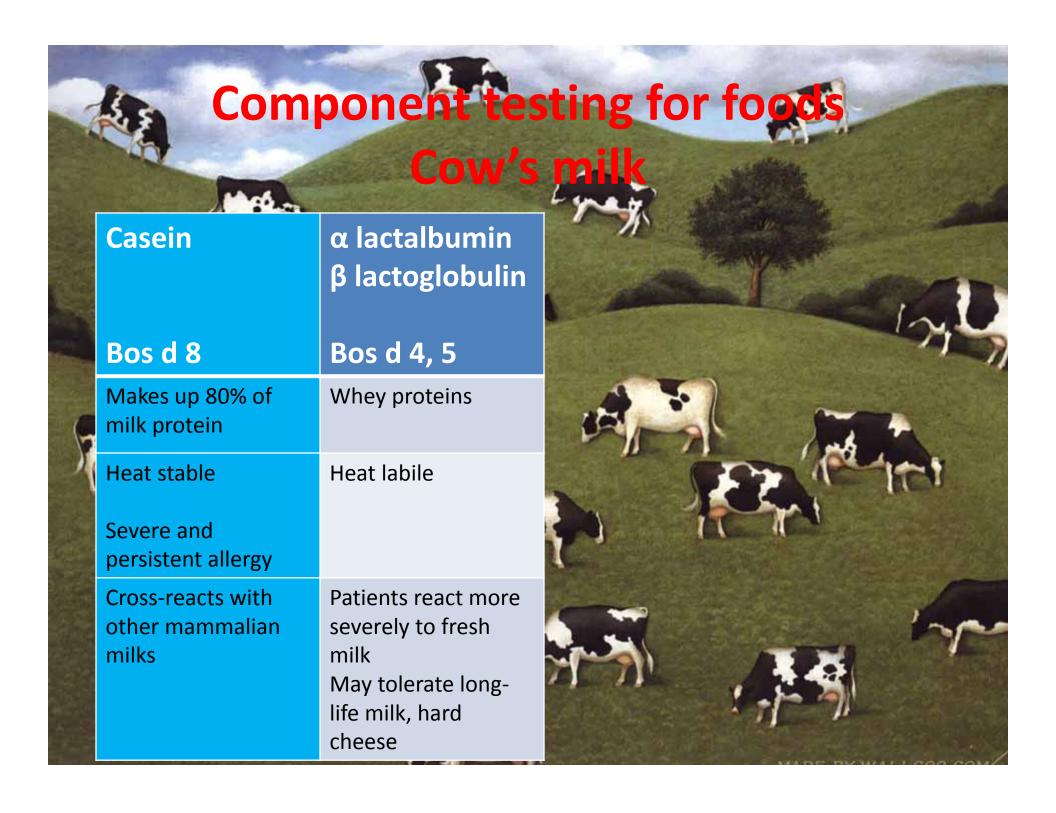


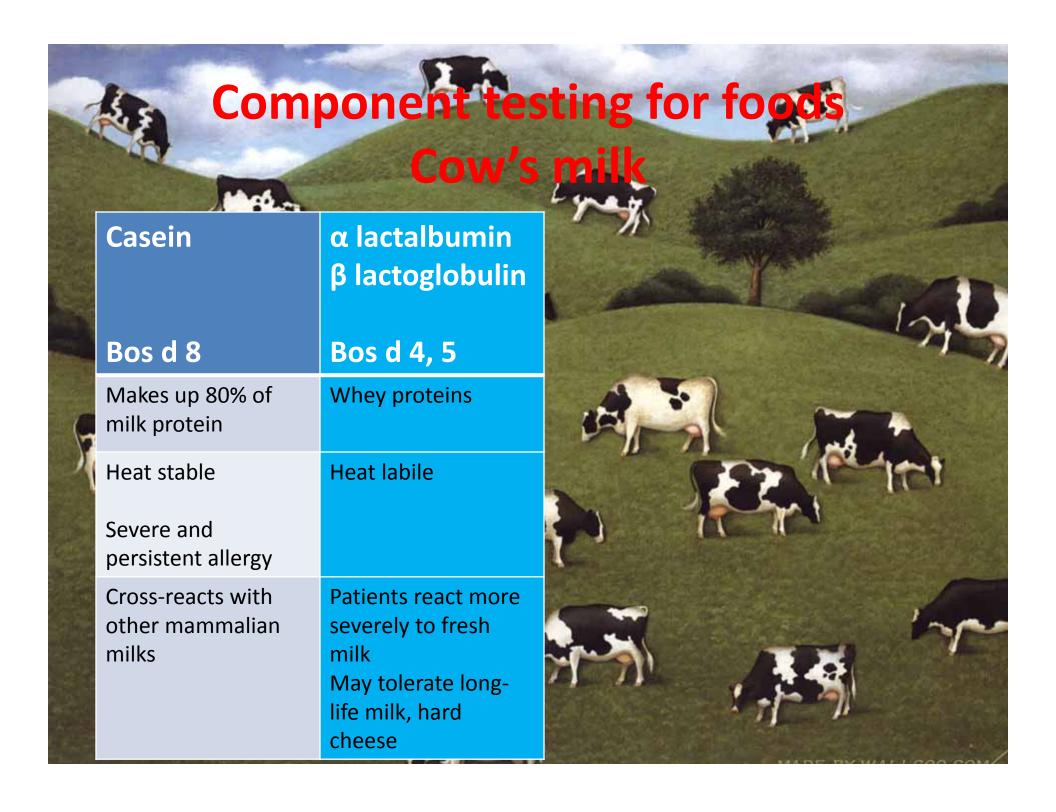
Component testing for foods

Cow's milk

	Casein	α lactalbumin β lactoglobulin	Bovine serum albumin	Lactoferrin
	Bos d 8	Bos d 4, 5	Bos d 6	
5	Makes up 80% of milk protein	Whey proteins	Occurs in milk and beef	
1	Heat stable	Heat labile	Heat labile	Heat labile
	Severe and persistent allergy		May tolerate well cooked milk	Reacts to fresh milk
THE RESERVE OF THE PARTY OF THE	Cross-reacts with other mammalian milks	Patients react more severely to fresh milk May tolerate long- life milk, hard cheese	Cross reacts with other mammals	

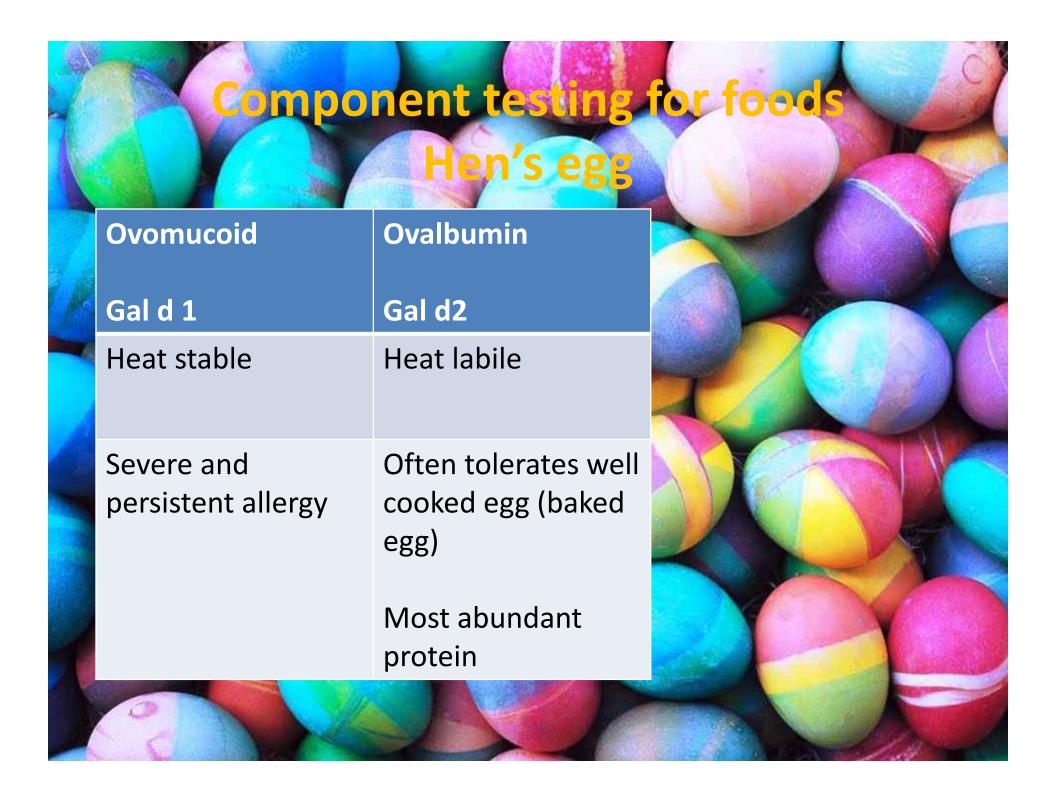


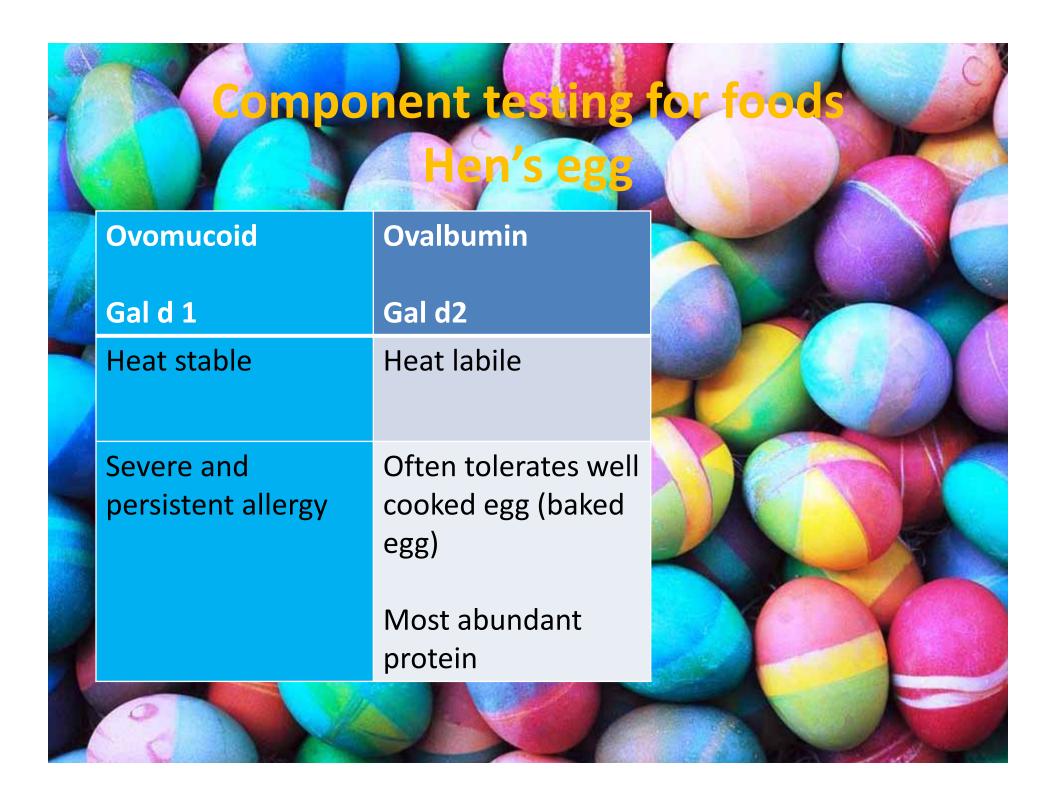


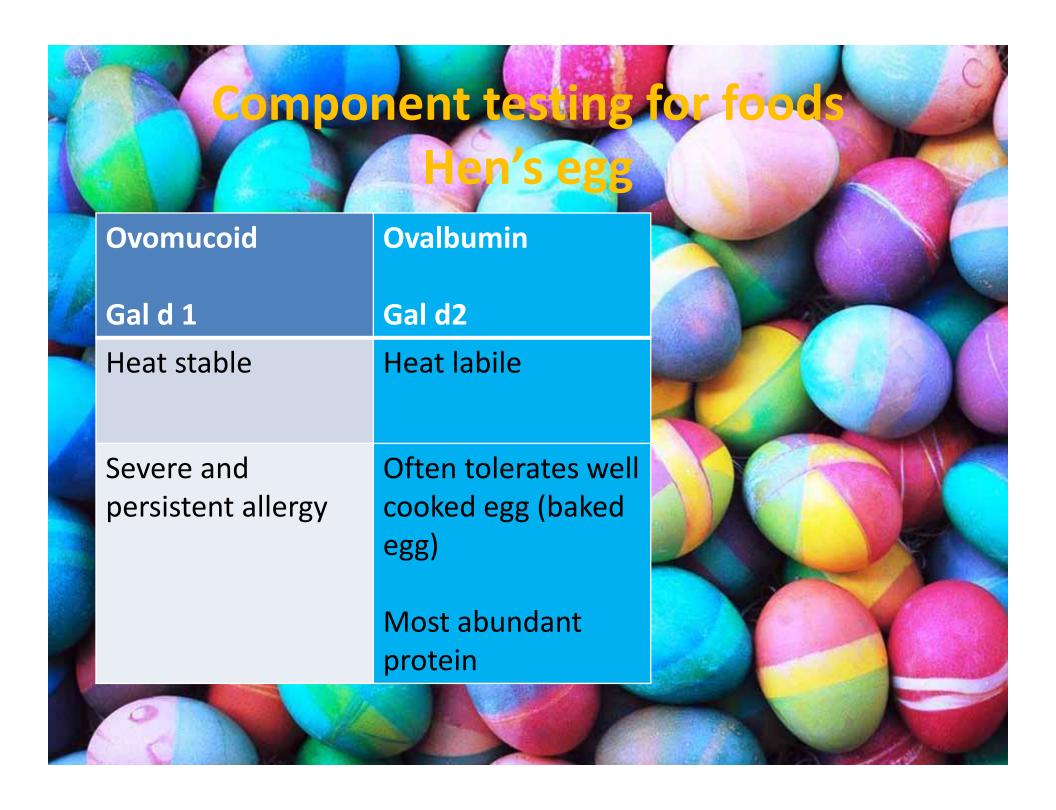


Component testing for foods Hen's egg

Ovomucoid	Ovalbumin	Egg serum albumin
Gal d 1	Gal d2	Gal d 5
Heat stable	Heat labile	
Severe and persistent allergy	Often tolerates well cooked egg (baked egg) Most abundant protein	Occurs in yolk, cross reacts with chicken serum albumin in chicken meat and feathers







Component testing for foods Peanut

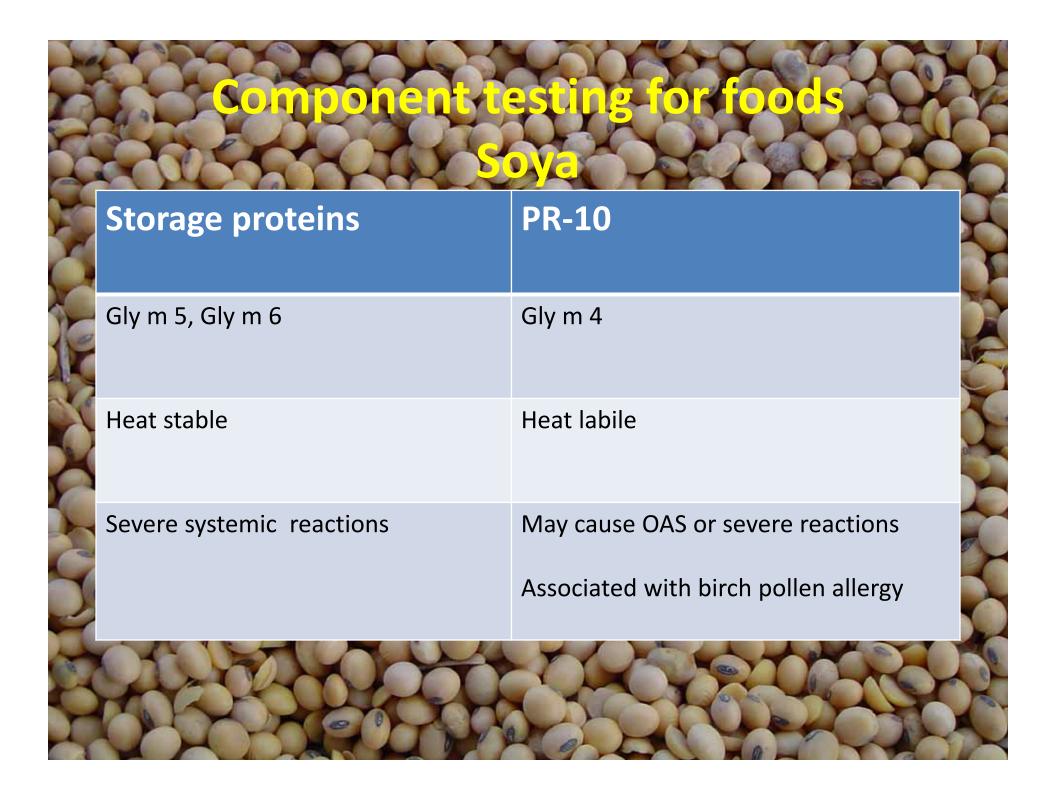
Storage proteins	Profilin	PR-10	LTP
Ara h 1, 2, 3, 6	Ara h 5	Ara h 8	Ara h 9
Heat stable	Heat labile	Heat labile	Heat stable
Risk of anaphylaxis Cross reacts with other nuts/seeds	Marker of grass pollen cross reactivity	Marker of grass pollen cross reactivity	Systemic and local reactions incl OAS

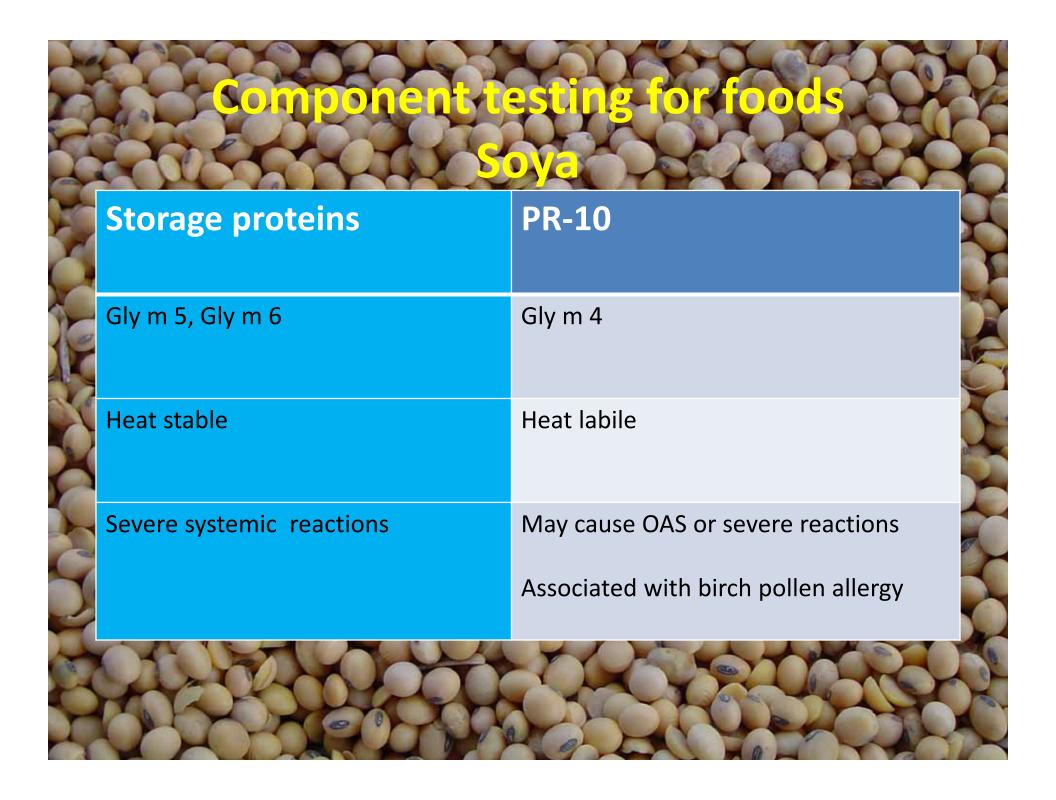


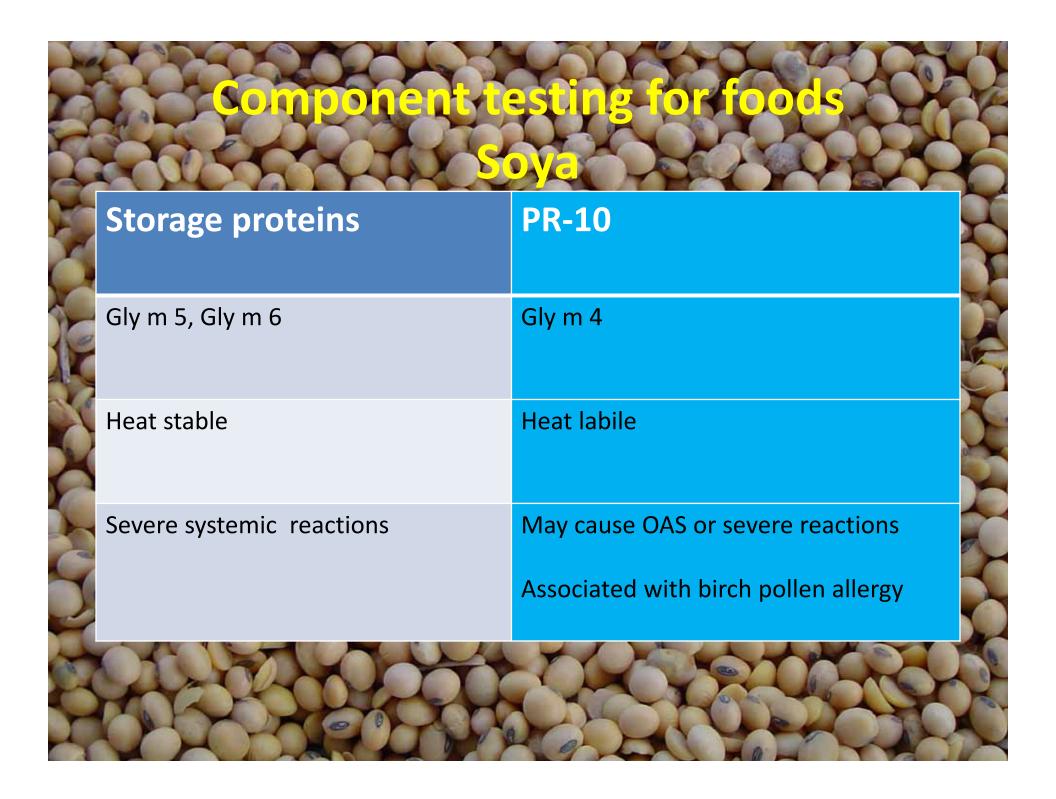
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Ara h 1, 2, 3, 6	Ara h 5	Ara h 8	Ara h 9
Heat stable Risk of anaphylaxis	Heat labile Marker of grass pollen	Heat labile Marker of grass pollen	Heat stable Systemic and local
Cross reacts with other nuts/seeds	cross reactivity	cross reactivity	reactions incl OAS



Storage proteins	Profilin	PR-10	LTP
Ara h 2	Ara h 5	Ara h 8	Ara h 9
Heat stable Risk of anaphylaxis	Heat labile Marker of	Heat labile Marker of	Heat stable Systemic
Cross reacts with other nuts/seeds	grass pollen cross reactivity	grass pollen cross reactivity	and local reactions incl OAS

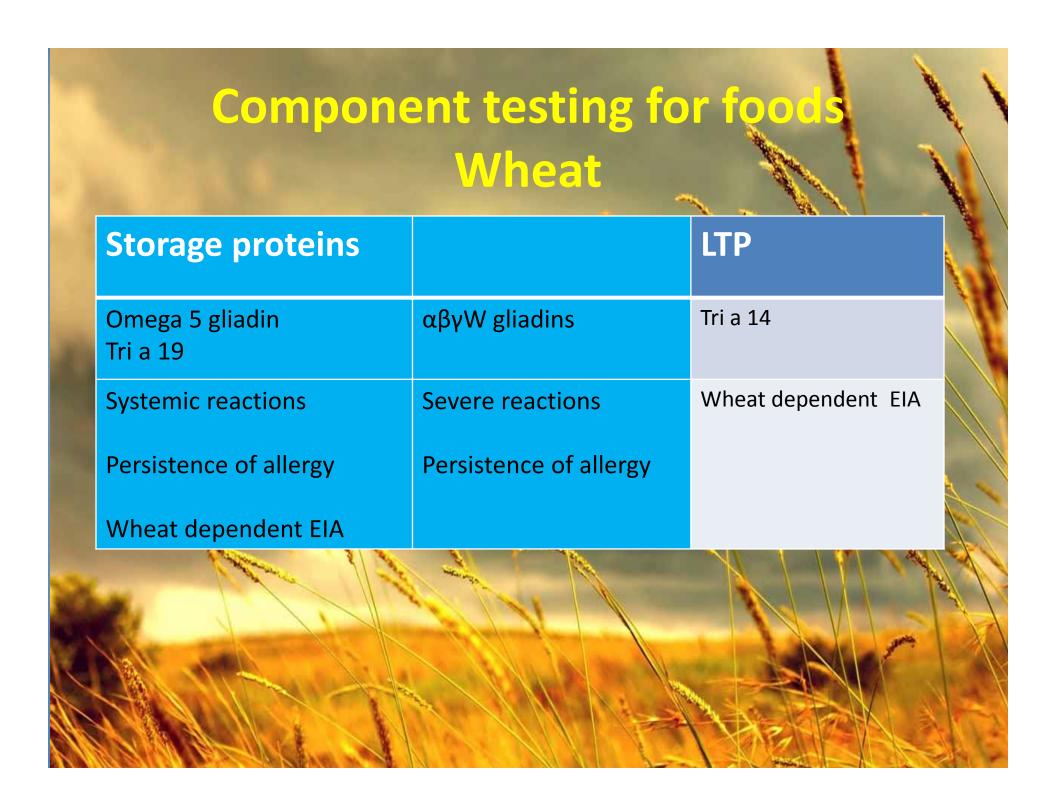


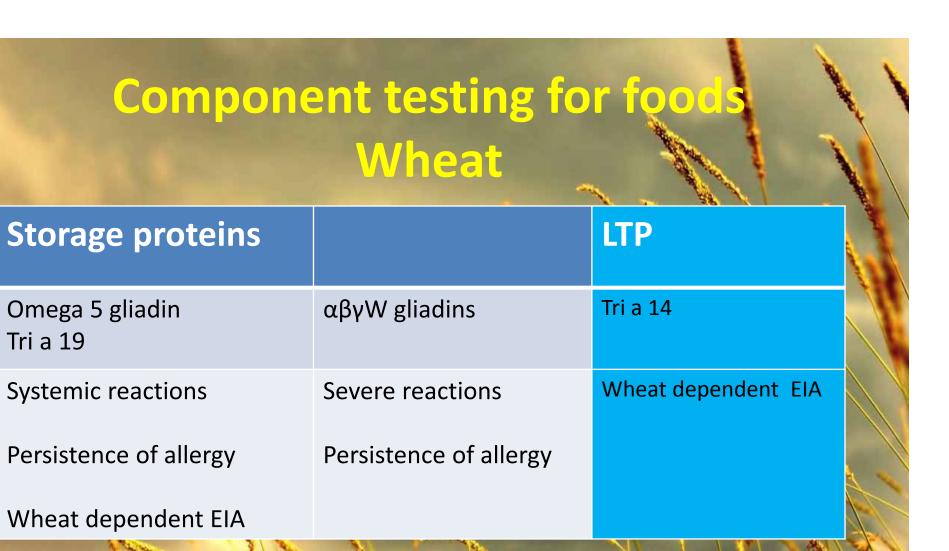


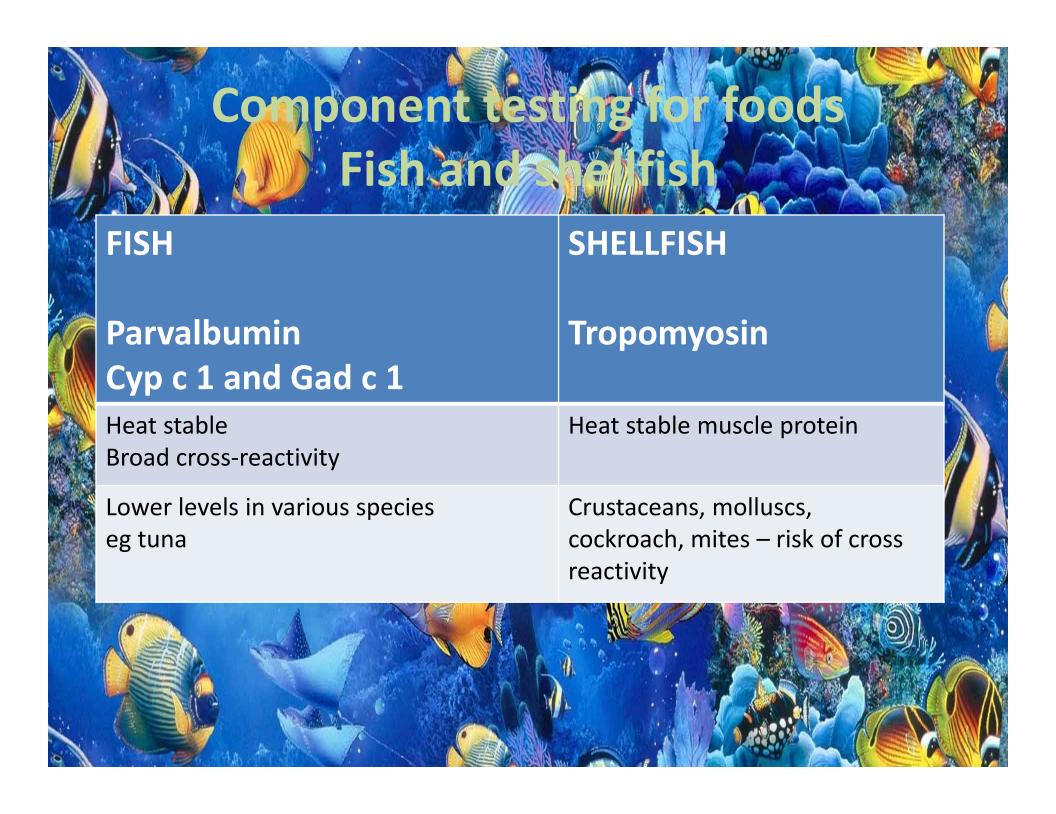


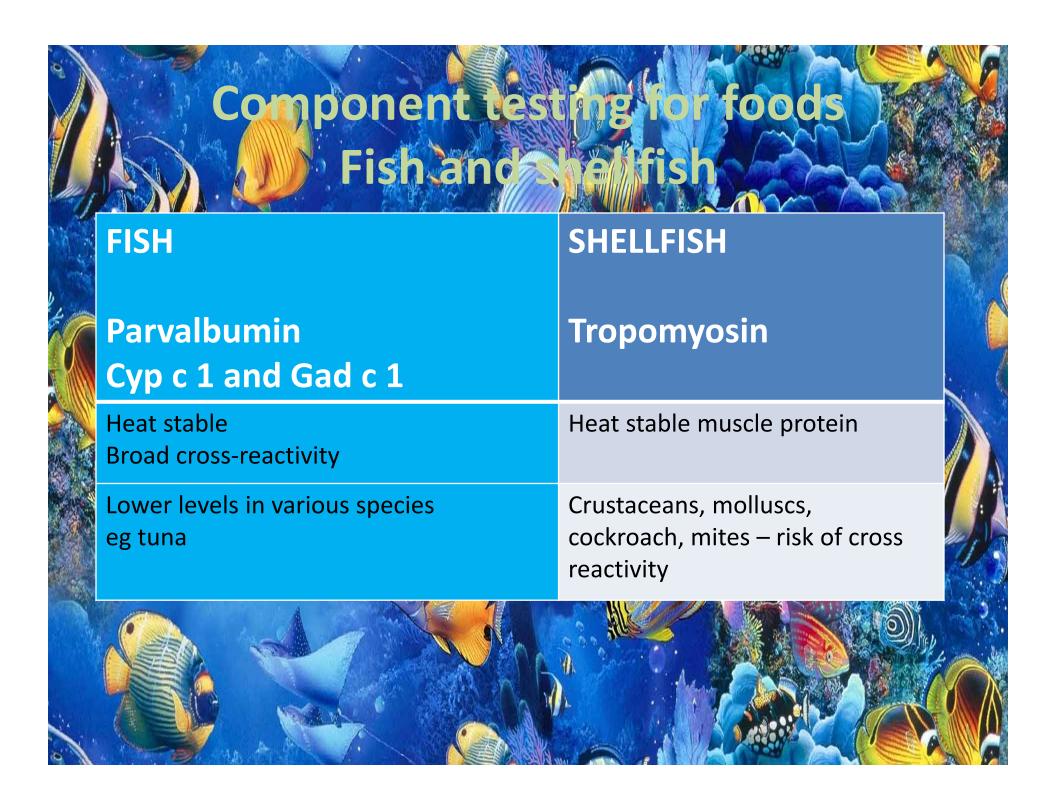


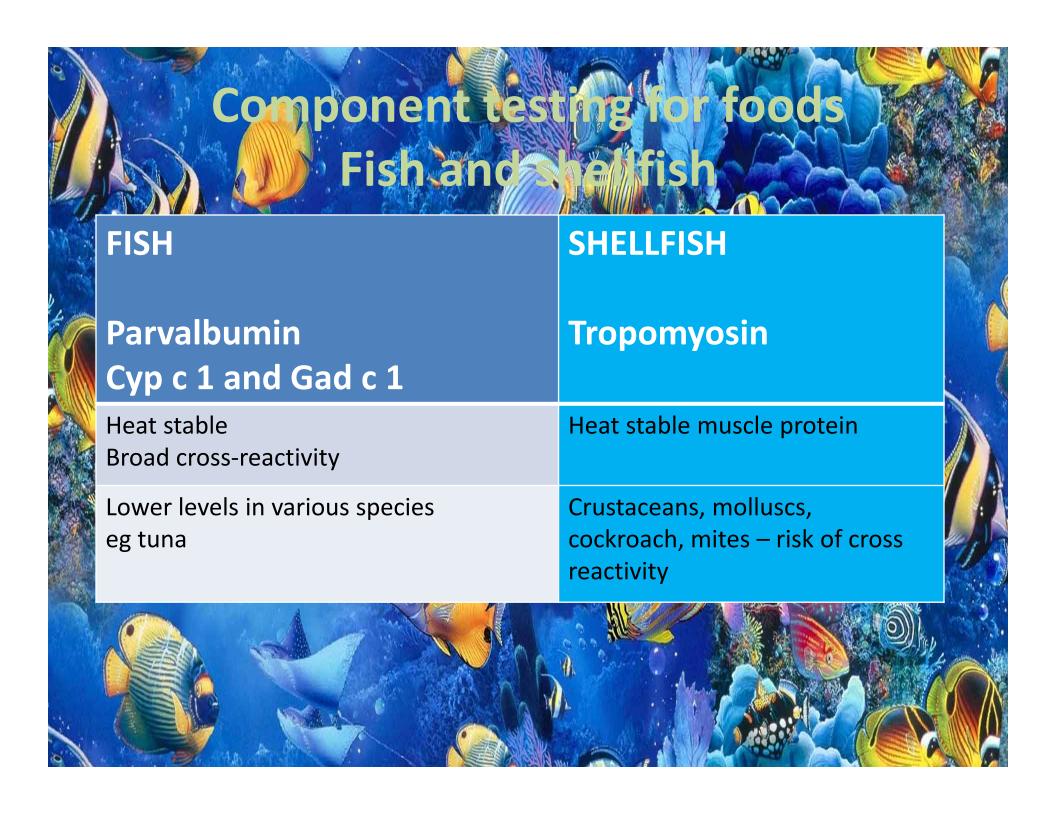
Storage proteins		LTP
Omega 5 gliadin Tri a 19	αβγW gliadins	Tri a 14
Systemic reactions	Severe reactions	Wheat dependent EIA
Persistence of allergy	Persistence of allergy	
Wheat dependent EIA		











Component testing for animals

- Cross reactions can occur between animals
- The primary sensitiser should be identified before starting immunotherapy
- Cat Fel d 1
- Dog Can f 1, 2 and 5
- Horse Equ c 1
- Equ c 1 and Fel d 4 cross react (both are lipocalins) – important when deciding on horse immunotherapy

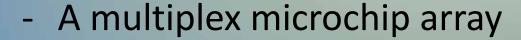
Component testing

Should not be used for screening or first-line tests

 Useful as a second-line test in poly-sensitized patients to distinguish genuine sensitivity from cross-reactions

 Available as individual components or on multiplex platforms such as the ISAC test

Immuno solid-phase allergen chip





- IgE is detected to multiple recombinant allergen components
- Requires only 20 μl serum to measure specific IgE to 112 different allergens

What is the difference between the ISAC and standard IgE tests?

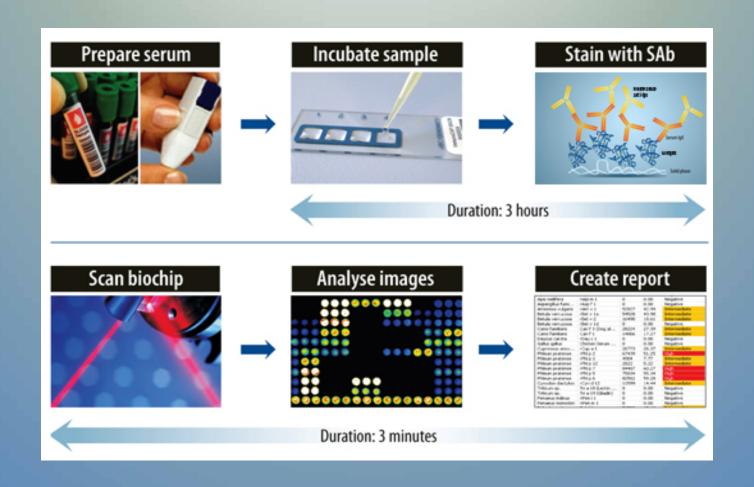
- ImmunoCAP® test is based on allergen extracts prepared from biological raw materials
- Major and minor allergen components are not always standardised
- ISAC recombinant allergen components produced in a laboratory

Useful for

- Patients with multiple allergies
- Patients with combined food and inhalant allergies
- Patients with suspected allergen cross-reactivity
- Patients who require a more in-depth interpretation of their allergies

Drawbacks:

- Not useful for drug and occupational allergy
- Does not contain every allergen, thus history is still the most important guide as to which test to request
- Expensive



Tryptase

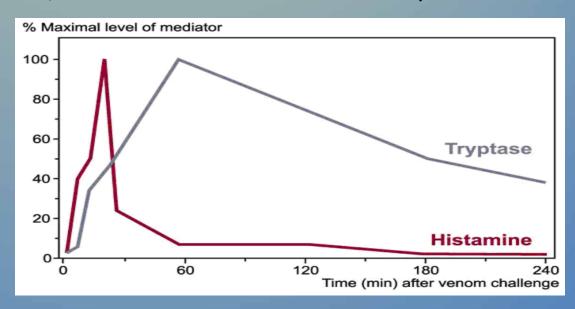
Tryptase is a sensitive and specific marker of mast cell degranulation

Helpful in the context of anaphylaxis

 Serum levels peak at 1 hour after a reaction and decline thereafter over 6 hours

Repeat samples taken at 0, 1 and 6 hours after the event may confirm

anaphylaxis

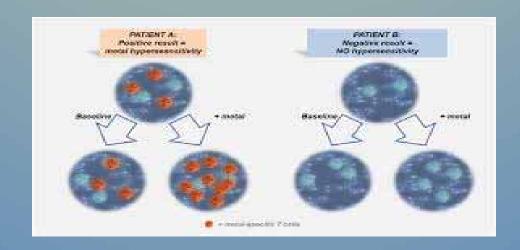


CAST

- CAST = cellular antigen stimulation test
- Some patients have sensitivity to various foods, colourants, flavourants, preservatives or medications that are mediated by basophil activation
- The CAST test measures basophil activation markers by flow-cytometry after exposure of the patients blood to the relevant allergen
- Useful for reactions to colourants and preservatives and drug allergies

MELISA

- Memory Lymphocyte Immunostimulation assay
- Tests for T-cell mediated reactions due to drugs, metals, latex and food



 First used in 1896, the patch test has evolved as the definitive diagnostic technique for allergic contact dermatitis

 This is of particular importance as >3700 substances have been identified as contact allergens



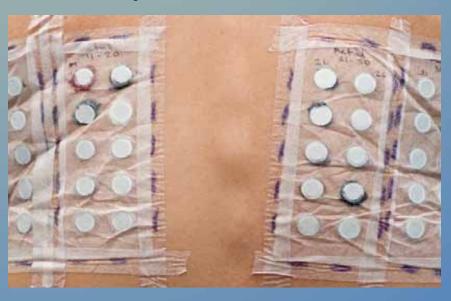
Common patch test techniques



Finn chambers – individual 8mm aluminium chambers, filled and applied

TRUE test – preloaded template of 23 common contact allergens

- Placed on the back
- Keep on for 48 hrs
- Read at 48 and 72 or 96hrs
- Occasionally as late as 7 days



 30% of relevant allergens are negative at 48 hrs but positive at 96hrs

 If positive reactions disappear by 96hrs, they may be due to irritants

Weak sensitizers may need to be read at 7 dys



Common

- Health professions
- Beauticians
- Machinists
- Food processors
- Construction workers

-	negative
?+	doubtful
+	faint macular, erythema only weak(non- vesicular)positive
++	Strong(vesicular) positive erythema, infiltration, possibly papules
+++	extreme positive bullous reaction erythema, infiltration, papules, vesicles
R+	Irritant Reaction of different types Ring reaction

Atopy patch test

The Atopy patch test is a modification of the traditional patch test

- Evaluated in patients with atopic eczema and eosinophilic esophagitis as an adjunct for the diagnosis of food allergy
- Also used for drugs that cause mixed cutaneous reactions

Atopy patch test

- Food placed in 12mm Finn chambers on patients back
- 2g of food in 2ml saline (or single ingredient commercially prepared food)
- Keep on for 48hrs
- Read results at 72hrs
- For drugs, read at 48, 96hrs and 7dys if negative

Atopy patch test

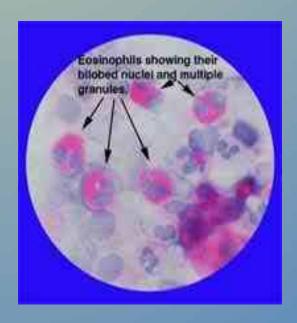
- Clinical relevance still evolving
- Not yet standardized, nor reproducible



Nasal eosinophils

 Helpful to distinguish between allergic and non-allergic rhinitis

- Sensitivity ~ 50%
- Specificity ~ 88%



Clinical relevance

- Asthma/AR/AC
- Food allergy
- Atopic eczema
- Contact dermatitis
- Anaphylaxis
- Drug allergy
- Acute urticaria
- Chronic urticaria
- Insect venom allergy

Asthma/rhinitis/conjunctivitis

- Consider seasonality and geography
- Seasonal do tree pollens via SPT or specific IgE
- Perennial do Phadiatop
 - if positive, do individual IgE or do SPTs
 for inhalants
- If negative, consider another mechanism: do CAST or nasal mucous for eosinophils

Asthma/rhinitis/conjunctivitis

Commonest perennial inhalant allergens in SA

- Bermuda grass and rye grass (cross reacts with most SA grasses)
- D pteronyssinus (cross reacts with D farinae)
- B tropicalis
- Alternaria
- Cladosporium
- Aspergillus
- Cat
- Dog



Food allergy

- History and examination
- Immediate reactions food mixes, specific IgE, SPT, components, oral food challenge
- Delayed reactions CAST, MELISA, scope/biopsy, coeliac tests, reducing substances, H breath test, exclusion/reintroduction
- Oral allergy syndrome do pollens and crossreactive components (profilin, PR-10, LTP and CCD)

Atopic eczema

History and examination



- Most children with AE do not have food allergy
- 30-40% with moderate to severe AE may have a food allergy
- May have multiple false positives
- Test only for foods implicated on history

Atopic eczema



- Specific IgE (or Fx5 screen followed by specific IgE if +)
- SPTs for foods, house dust mite and animal dander sensitisation
- (flow-CAST and APT)
- Elimination and reintroduction under supervision of a dietician
- Oral food challenge

Contact dermatitis

- History
- Examination



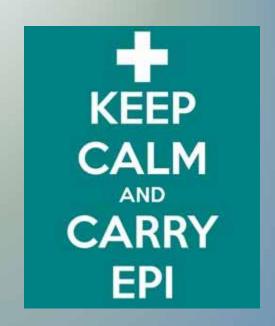


Patch test – True test, European baseline series (a mix of 26 different allergens), hairdressing, cosmetic and sunscreen series etc

MELISA – nickel, latex, gold, aluminium, platinum

Anaphylaxis

- History
- Examination
- Tryptase



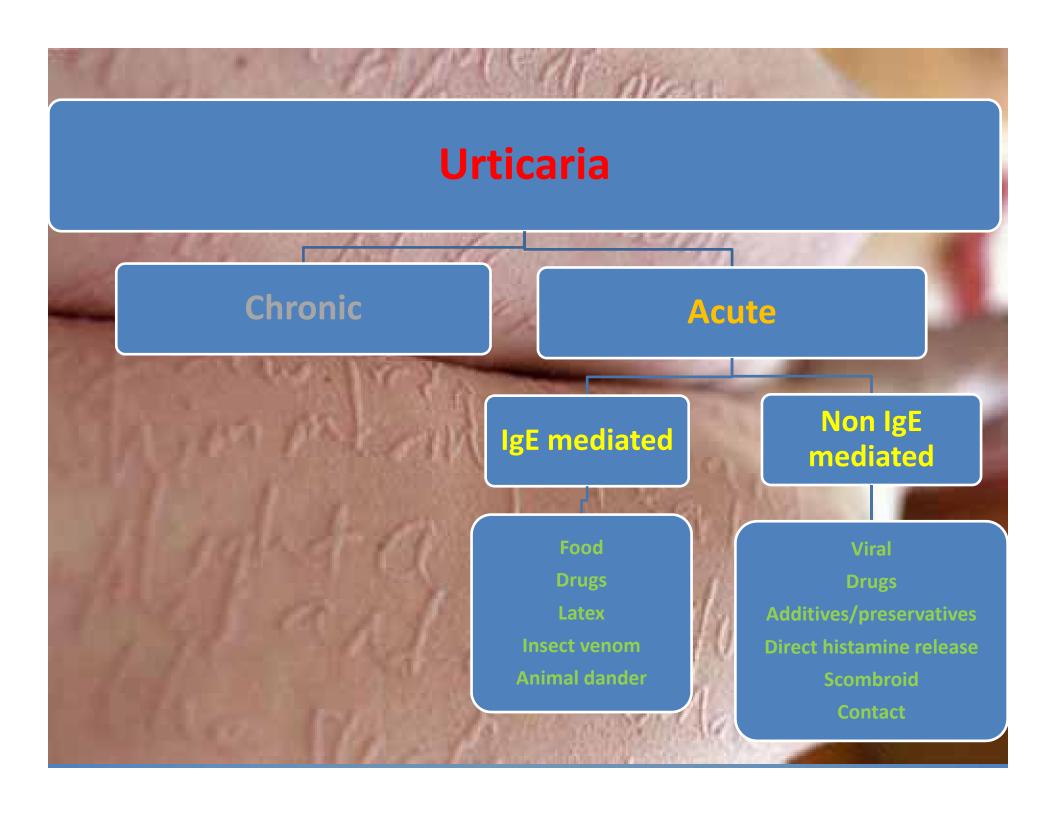
- Specific IgE or flow-CAST based on clinical history (beware SPTs)
- EIA omega 5 gliadin

Drug allergy

- History
- Examination

 Immediate reactions – Specific IgE, SPT, CAST, drug provocation test

Delayed reactions – C3, C4, skin biopsy, CAST,
 MELISA, Patch test, drug provocation



Urticaria Chronic Acute **Spontaneous Inducible** no obvious trigger specific trigger Cold FBC & ESR **Delayed pressure Avoid suspected drugs** Solar **Dermographic TFT and antibodies Vibratory ASST, SPT, dipstix** Cholinergic **Autoantibodies** Heat Skin biopsy, Tryptase **Aquagenic Pseudoallergen free diet Infectious diseases Specific provocation tests**

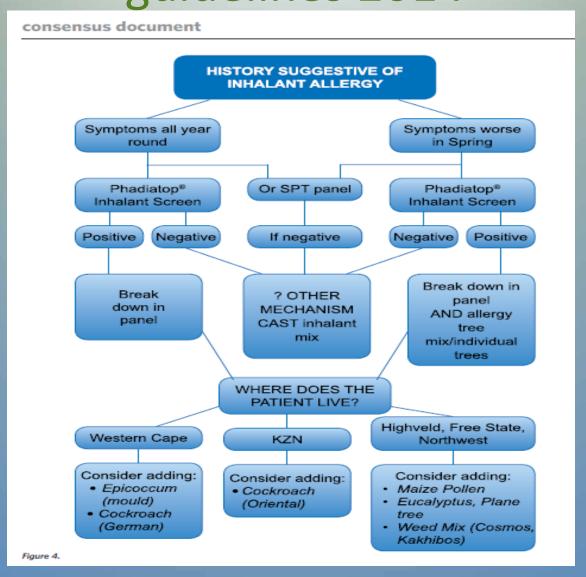
Insect venom

- History
- Examination
- Specific IgE
- (SPT)
- Component testing to identify primary sensitisation and cross-reactivity
- Bee Api m 1 and Api m 10
- Wasp Ves v 1 and Ves v 5
- Paper wasp Pol d 5
- CCD

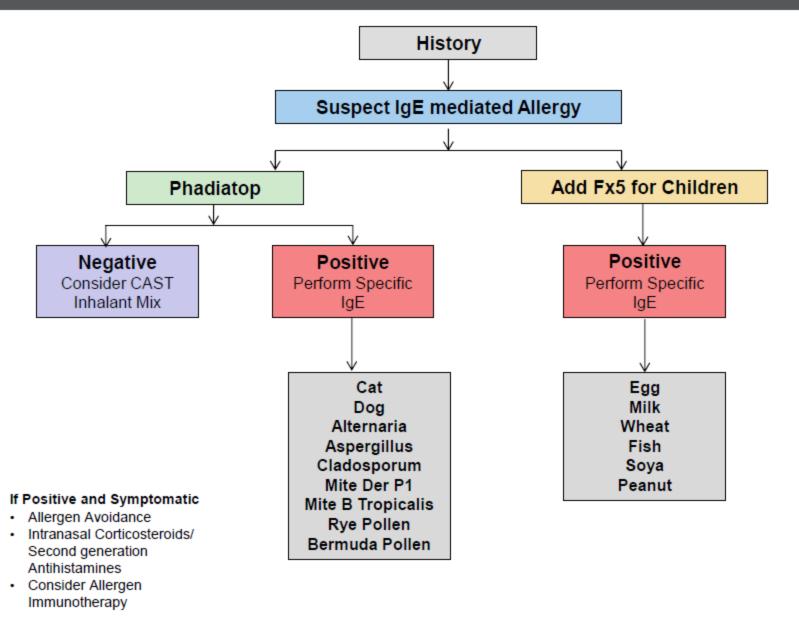




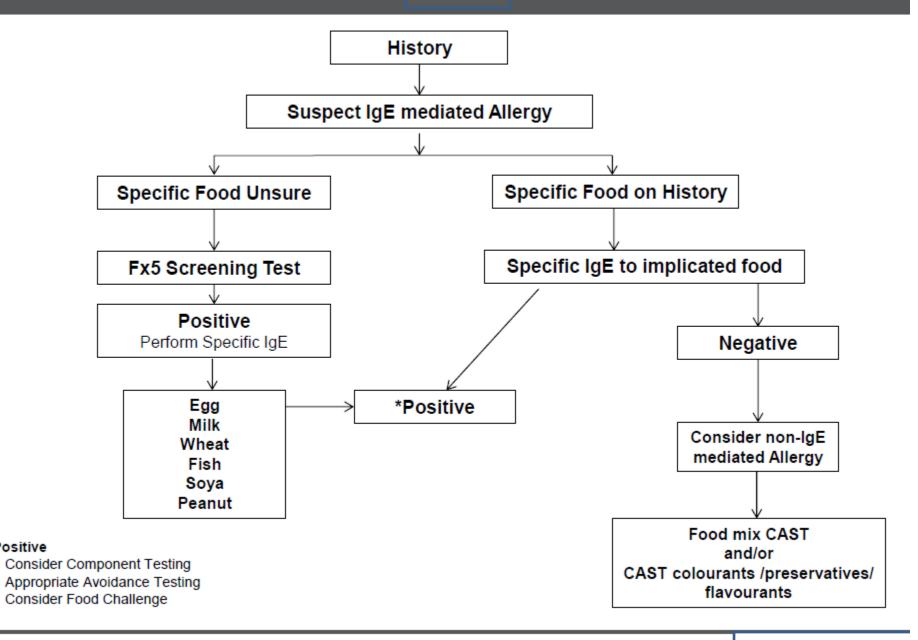
South African Allergic rhinitis guidelines 2014



Diagnostic Algorithm for in-vitro Inhalant Allergy Testing

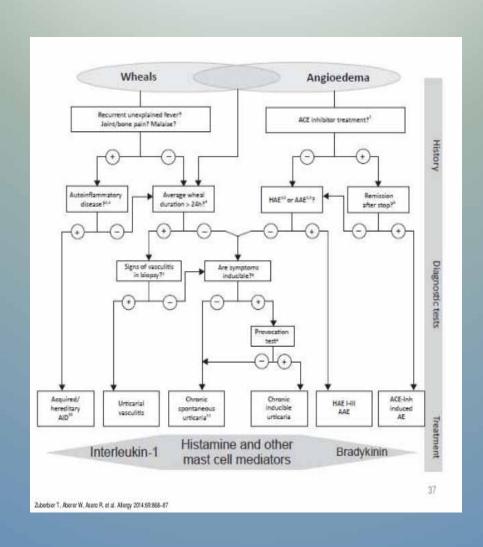


Food Allergy Testing



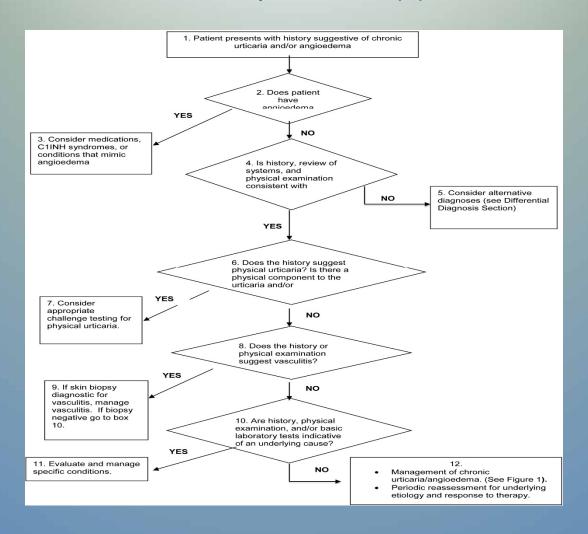
*Positive

EAACI/GA²LEN/EDF/WAO urticaria guideline 2014



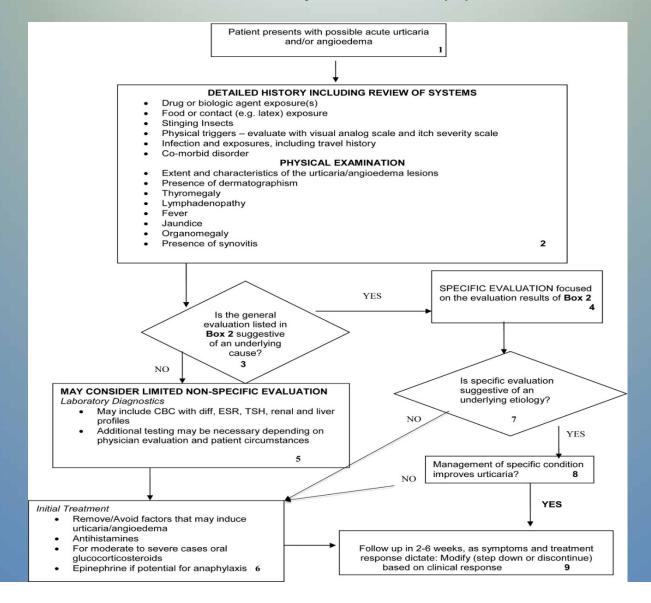
Chronic urticaria guideline

JACI May 2014: 133(5)



Acute urticaria guideline

JACI May 2014: 133(5)



If Allergic to:	Risk of Reaction to at Least One:	Risk:
A legume*	Other legumes peas	5%
A tree nut	Other tree nuts cashew brazil hazelnut	37%
A fish*	Other fish swordfish sole	50%
A shellfish	Other shellfish crab lobster	75%
A grain*	Other grains barley rye	20%
Cow's milk*	Beef hamburger	10%
Cow's milk*	Goat's milk	92%
Cow's milk*	Mare's milk	4%
Pollen birch ragweed	Fruits/vegetables peach honeydew	55%
Peach*	Other Rosaceae plum pear pear cherry	55%
Melon* cantaloupe	Other fruits avocado watermelon banana	92%
Latex*	Fruits avocado	35%
Fruits banana kiwi avocado	Latex latex glove	11%

