

SUSPECTED IgE MEDIATED FOOD ALLERGY IN CHILDREN

Food allergy is divided into IgE mediated and non-IgE mediated allergy (sometimes incorrectly called 'food intolerance'). Some children have both types of allergy. The history is the key factor when considering 'allergy' as the diagnosis. It is important to decide from the history which type of allergy you suspect - the investigations, management and referral are different. Symptoms of IgE mediated allergy (urticaria, stridor, wheeze, vomiting and shock) occur within minutes of exposure. Symptoms of non-IgE mediated allergy (eczema/gastrointestinal symptoms) can occur up to 24-48 hours later. Most patients with non-IgE mediated allergy can be safely challenged at home whereas most patients with IgE mediated allergy need to be challenged in hospital. Specific IgE levels and skin prick tests should not be performed in non-IgE mediated allergy as they will be negative (NICE GUIDANCE – Food Allergy in Children 2011 www.nice.org.uk/CG116).

Take an allergy focused clinical history

- **ONLY** perform investigations if a food is suspected of causing an IgE mediated allergic reaction
- Investigations need to be interpreted in light of the history – false positives and false negatives do occur
- Do **NOT** screen using large panels of tests
- Do **NOT** test for foods that are in the diet and tolerated without any symptoms
- Family history of food allergy is **NOT** an indication for investigation

Suitable investigations

- Blood sample for specific IgE level
- Skin prick test
- **Do NOT use alternative tests:** IgG levels, vega test, kinesiology, hair analysis

Referral criteria to paediatrician

- Acute systemic reaction involving respiratory tract, GIT or CVS
- IgE mediated allergy causing symptoms
- IgE mediated allergy (including food and aeroallergens) and concurrent asthma
- Proven or suspected multiple food IgE mediated allergies
- Persistent suspicion of IgE mediated food allergy despite negative investigations

- If referral criteria not met, may be managed in primary care
- Advice from a paediatric dietitian is essential if a child is on an exclusion diet, refer to hospital paediatric dietitian

Refer to:

- **Multidisciplinary Paediatric Allergy Clinic**
 - Consultant Paediatrician
 - Paediatric Dietitian
 - Specialist Paediatric Nurse

- Consider repeat allergy testing:
 - Pre infant school
 - Prior to senior school
 - Prior to leaving school