

Overview

Following the assessment of an individual's symptoms, the performance of relevant tests may yield information that an allergy practitioner can use to confirm the provisional clinical diagnosis. This is not straightforward and requires knowledge of allergic disorders, causative allergens and the predictive value of tests. The difficulty is that tests are often positive in patients who are not clinically allergic to that allergen. An allergy history is therefore essential to interpret these tests, and it is occasionally necessary to initiate further tests to confirm the diagnosis. There is a lower threshold for referring children with possible food allergy because of the difficulty of interpreting tests and the nutritional consequences of food exclusion.

Users of this standard will need to ensure that practice reflects up to date information and policies.

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Interpret tests to check allergy diagnosis

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

- P1 familiarise yourself with all the details of the individual's history of symptoms
- P2 gather all other medical information including test results relating to the individual from all involved members of the multidisciplinary team
- P3 assess the probability that the individual's symptoms are due to exposure to the corresponding allergens in the light of the individual's history and the results of the skin-prick and blood test results for allergy
- P4 if test results are positive, determine from a history whether this is clinically relevant
- P5 if test results are negative, determine from history whether they might represent false-negative results and repeat the tests
- P6 confirm that there are no other plausible causes of the symptoms
- P7 assess the likelihood of whether exposure to the allergen is or is not responsible for the symptoms
- P8 discuss the case in detail with a colleague if you need a further opinion
- P9 explain to the individual what the results mean for their condition and for them personally
- P10 refer the individual for further tests or opinion if required

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

- K1 common allergic conditions and their presentation
- K2 the of use and availability of diagnostic tests
- K3 how to take an accurate allergy history
- K4 how to interpret validated diagnostic allergy tests
- K5 the predictive values for diagnostic allergy tests
- K6 how to distinguish allergy symptoms from other conditions presenting with similar conditions
- K7 evidence based decision making based on current guidelines on allergy diagnosis

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Additional Information

External Links

This standard links with the following dimension within the NHS Knowledge and Skills Framework (October 2004):

Dimension: HWB6 Assessment and treatment planning

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Developed by	Skills for Health
Version number	1
Date approved	June 2010
Indicative review date	June 2012
Validity	Current
Status	Original
Originating organisation	Skills for Health
Original URN	AL8
Relevant occupations	Health, Public Services and Care; Healthcare and Related Personal Services
Suite	Allergy Services
Key words	Allergen, challenge tests, investigation, results, skin prick tests