

# Ordering blood tests to investigate suspected allergy

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## Disclosures:

- Member of ASCIA Chronic Urticaria, and Drug Allergy Working parties
- Staff, ACT Pathology

## Summary

- Main causes of urticaria in children
- When and how to order allergen specific IgE tests (previously called RASTs)
- Interpreting allergen specific IgE test results

# Urticaria in children

## Table 2. Potential Causes of Urticaria

### Acute

Post-Infective

Allergy (food, medications, stings, aeroallergens, contact allergens)

Serum sickness

Food additives (MSG, tartrazine, benzoates, antioxidants, sulphites)

Radiographic contrast dyes

### Chronic/Recurrent

Physical urticarias

Chronic infection

Systemic disease (autoimmune thyroid disease, connective tissue disease, systemic or cutaneous vasculitis, malignancy)

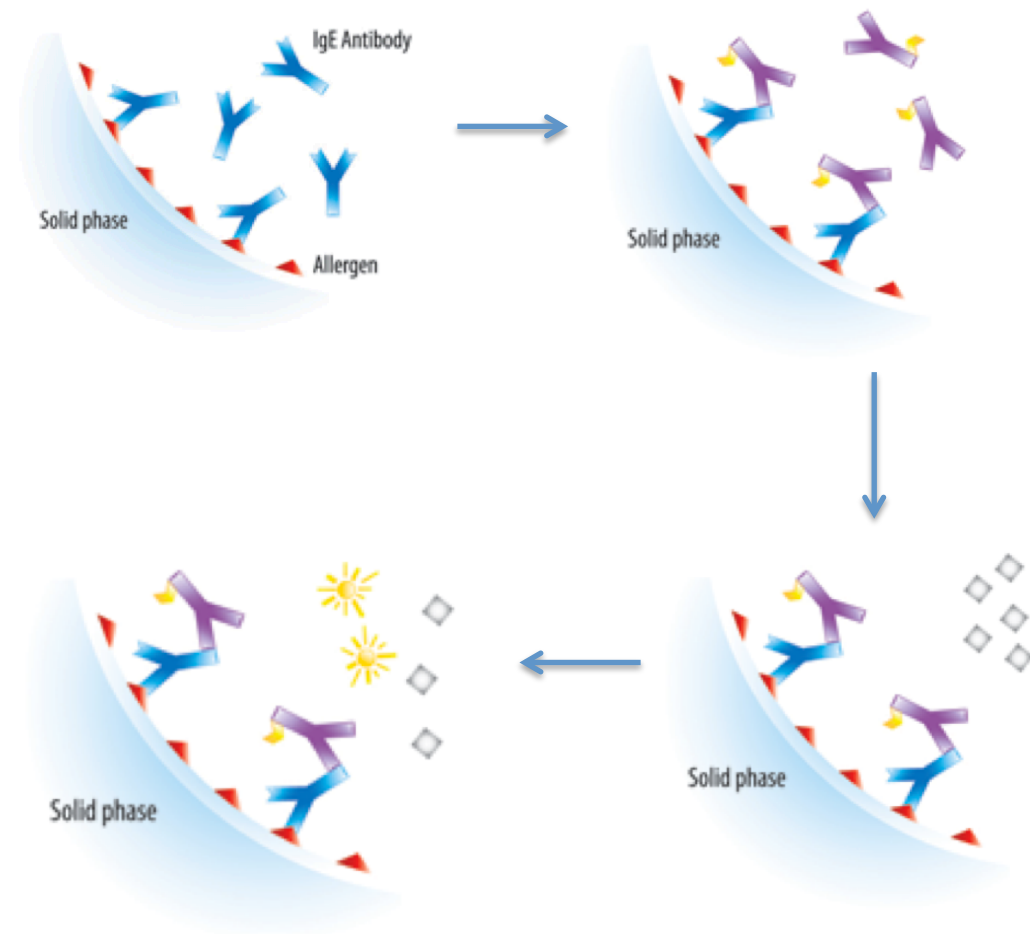
Urticaria pigmentosa (cutaneous mastocytosis)

<http://www.allergy.org.au/health-professionals/papers/urticaria>

## When and how to order allergen specific IgE tests (previously called RASTs)

- To confirm a particular food as a cause of an allergic reaction
- To confirm aeroallergen sensitisation in patients with hayfever (and sometimes, eczema)
- Check for allergen specific IgE to aspergillus to confirm ABPA

# Allergen specific IgE testing



<http://www.phadia.com/en/Products/Allergy-testing-products/ImmunoCAP-Lab-Tests/sIgE/Test-Principle/>

## General principles

- Sensitisation doesn't necessarily mean allergy
- The degree of sensitisation will signify the likelihood of allergy over a population but may not apply to the patient in front of you
- Children can have immune reactions to food that are not due to the presence of IgE to the foods
- Don't test for IgE to a food that the child is tolerating as it may be positive and of no clinical relevance/significance

## Are mixes a good idea?

- Mixtures of aeroallergens where the patient can't readily avoid one are probably useful (ie grass mix)
- Mixtures for foods are rarely useful – as if positive, repeat testing needs to be done to clarify the positive component(s)

## Useful further reading and info sheets for parents

- Pre-referral guidelines for Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne:  
<http://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/allergy/Prereferral%20Guidelines%20food%20allergy%20v6%20May%202013.pdf>
- Information sheets for parents about hives:  
<http://www.allergy.org.au/patients/skin-allergy/urticaria-hives>
- ASCIA website generally has information about specific food allergies, allergy and anaphylaxis action plans:  
<http://www.allergy.org.au/health-professionals>