

Allergy Testing

Allergen specific IgE should be requested to a limited number of allergens guided by the history. A normal level of total IgE does not rule out the presence of allergen-specific IgE, and therefore should not be relied on as a screening test for allergy. Positive allergen specific IgE indicates sensitisation but does not confirm clinical allergy. Raised total IgE can cause false positive allergen-specific IgE. Results should always be interpreted in the clinical context.

Common allergens to consider in those with asthma and perennial rhinitis are house dust mite and cat. In those with poorly controlled asthma consider testing for specific IgE to aspergillus. IgE to grass pollen should be tested for in those with seasonal rhinitis. Testing to other inhaled allergens is indicated by the history. Specific IgE to foods should be individually requested and guided by the history. Broad screening for food allergy is not usually helpful in adults and older children.

Further advice on allergy testing can be obtained by phoning the laboratory at 01-4162925 or from the Immunology Specialist Registrar by email at AllergyAdvice@stjames.ie or by faxing the Allergy Advice request form (available to download) to 01-4113008.