



Food & Medication Challenges

California – Fremont, Oakland, Redwood City · Idaho – Eagle · Oregon – Beaverton, Clackamas, Gresham, McMinnville, Newberg, Tigard · Washington – Bellevue, Fisher's Landing, Longview, Salmon Creek

What are Challenges?

Allergists use challenges as a tool to determine if a patient has a true allergy to a food or medication, to see how much of the food or medication can tolerate, and to determine the severity of the reaction to the food or medication. Challenges carry with them the risk of an anaphylactic reaction. Challenges should only be performed in an office that is equipped to manage a severe allergic reaction.

During a challenge, a patient will take several doses of the food or medication being tested. The first dose will be a very small amount. If no reaction occurs, a second dose, slightly larger than the first, will be given within 30 minutes to 1 hour. If no reaction occurs, the process will repeat. If no reaction occurs during the challenge, an average of 4-6 total doses will be given depending on the specific food or medication being tested. If a reaction does occur, the challenge will stop, and no additional doses will be given. Any allergic reaction symptoms will be treated at the office. All patients must remain in the office for at least 1 hour of observation following their last dose. If a reaction occurs, additional monitoring may be required.

Food Challenge

How to Prepare?

- Depending on the food, the medical staff may ask you to bring in the food to be challenged. Foods you will likely need to bring in include fish, shellfish, fruits, and baked egg.
- Stop taking antihistamines for 3 days before your challenge.
- Call the office to reschedule your challenge if the patient is experiencing any cold, flu, asthma, or allergy symptoms.
- Please bring 1-2 types of food to consume the challenge doses with. Examples include applesauce, pudding, yogurt, juice, or other food tolerated well at home. Bring a liquid beverage to rinse the mouth and wash down the doses.

Food and Drink: You may consume food and drinks during the challenge. However, we ask that you bring in food that the patient does not have any known allergies to. Please avoid bringing any snacks containing peanut, tree nuts, egg, milk, soy, fish, and shellfish to prevent unnecessary exposure to our other food allergy patients in the office. Avoid bringing any snacks that are messy or create crumbs.

What Happens After the Challenge?

Our allergists commonly perform food challenges before oral immunotherapy (OIT) or sublingual immunotherapy (SLIT) to determine which foods will require desensitization and which treatment is the most appropriate. Food challenges are also used at the completion of SLIT to ensure the foods are safe to eat after treatment and to see if OIT is needed for any of the foods in the bottle.

Medication Challenge

How to Prepare?

- Depending on the medication, the medical staff may ask you to bring in the medication to be challenged. Anesthetics typically need to be provided from your dentist or surgeon. We can send in a prescription for other types of medications for you to pick up from the pharmacy and bring in.
- Stop taking antihistamines for 3 days before your challenge.
- Call the office to reschedule your challenge if the patient is experiencing any cold, flu, asthma or allergy symptoms.
- You may consume food and drinks during the challenge. See the Food Challenge section for guidelines.

Required Medications for Both Challenges

You must bring these medications so that you are prepared should a delayed reaction occur once you leave our office:

- **Epinephrine auto-injectors**
- H1 antihistamine of choice (i.e. Zyrtec, Allegra, Claritin)
- H2 antihistamine of choice (i.e. famotidine)
- Asthma rescue inhaler with spacer, and montelukast if prescribed

If you do not bring your epinephrine auto-injector, you will not be able to proceed with the challenge.

Challenge Risks

As with all other types of allergy tests, the challenge process can have the following risks: itching, hives, or abdominal pain, which can progress to more serious reactions including shortness of breath, wheezing, chest tightness, cough, swelling of the tongue, throat, lips, or other body parts, abdominal cramping, and anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is a potentially life-threatening condition which can rarely lead to respiratory and/or cardiac arrest and possibly death.

Schedule a consult to see if a food or medication challenge is an option for you.

Things to Remember

- Expect to be in the office for approximately 4 hours. This appointment may be shorter if the challenge is ended early due to a reaction, or if all doses are tolerated well. The appointment may run longer if a reaction occurs and additional monitoring in office is needed.
- Stop taking antihistamines for **3 days** before your challenge.
- Call the office to reschedule your challenge if the patient is experiencing any cold, flu, asthma, or allergy symptoms.
- Bring the required foods or medications as directed.

You must bring your emergency medication, including your epinephrine auto-injector to your challenge.

Clinic Locations and Hours

Visit our website at www.columbiaallergy.com to find your nearest clinic offering food and medication challenges and for clinic hours.