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Everything You Wanted To Know About Food Allergy Testing: Skin Testing, ALCAT and Signet/LEAP/MRT, Muscle Testing, and ELISA

Food allergies and food allergy testing are some of the most misunderstood issues in medicine. Many people seem to have an opinion about allergies and allergy testing, yet most people don't understand how different one test is from the next. We have summarized the key strengths and weaknesses of each test so that you can impress your friends and even your doctors with your knowledge.

Skin Testing

Skin testing is the traditional test used by conventional medical doctors who specialize in allergies. Skin testing is when the skin is put into contact with a food by a prick, a scratch, or a patch. If the skin swells up following this contact with a food it is considered a positive reaction, and thus an allergy.

Skin testing has been used for many years, and is fairly useful in the context of certain types of reactions. However, there are problems with this approach. When most doctors and allergists use the word allergy, what they are actually referring to are five potential symptoms of a food allergy: asthma, eczema, hay fever, anaphylaxis, and hives.

Your gluten intolerance won't show up on skin testing, nor will 95% of the food allergies that most people experience. This is because those food allergies don't usually elicit a reaction on the skin when the food is applied to it.

Traditional food allergy doctors sometimes also use a blood test for food allergies. This is IgE antibody testing, often called RAST testing. IgE antibodies also tend to correlate with the limited definition of food allergy previously mentioned: asthma, eczema, hay fever, anaphylaxis, and hives. However, 95% of food allergies do not result in those five symptoms, because they are not IgE based immune reactions. Gluten is one example of this.

The **IBS Treatment Center** is the nation's leading facility for the successful treatment of Irritable Bowel Syndrome

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ALCAT and Signet/LEAP/MRT sometimes marketed as **LRA or ELISA/ACT**

This is a blood test which has been around for quite some time. It is widely marketed and gives the impression that it is highly scientific, but the scientific theory behind it has never been proven.

The theory is that the size of your white blood cells can be affected by the introduction of food into your blood. When this is done in the lab, changes in the size of your white blood cells are hypothesized to represent an immune reaction to the food. That is an interesting hypothesis, but that is all it is. There is no precedent for this type of testing, and the hypothesis has never been proven.

However, that is not the most concerning issue with this type of testing. In both published and clinical reproducibility studies, ALCAT had very poor reproducibility when sent split samples of the same blood. What this means is that identical samples from the same patient on the same day returned different results. If you can't trust the results, then whatever theory being used to support the results is irrelevant. This technology may have potential, but it hasn't been reached yet.

Muscle Testing also known as **Muscle Energy Testing or Applied Kinesiology**

Muscle testing is the act of holding a substance (a food) and then having a practitioner pull down on your outstretched arm to determine your ability to resist their pressure. The theory is that your strength will weaken if the substance does not mesh with your energy field.

This technique was developed by practitioners who could not draw blood nor run other types of testing, but who apparently saw a connection between food and health. There is no scientific reasoning supporting this procedure, and it really is as strange as it sounds. However, many people claim to have been helped through muscle energy testing, and the number of people who practice this type of testing is significant.

If there is something to the theory that your energy is being affected by a particular substance, this methodology is still very dependent on the practitioner (the person pulling on your arm). There may have been a time when this was better than no testing at all and, maybe there is something to the idea that our energy is affected by various substances, but there are now better tools available with which to detect food allergies.

ELISA Antibody Testing

Please note: ELISA/ACT testing (see above), and ELISA testing (described here) are not the same thing. ELISA (enzyme-linked immuno-sorbent assay) testing is a well-established method for detecting antibodies in your blood. Antibodies are produced by your immune system. ELISA testing is used throughout the medical field in a variety of applications and is highly reproducible when run by a quality lab with high quality control standards.

It is not a simple testing method, but it is very scientific and very accurate when done properly. There are many double-blind placebo-controlled studies that have demonstrated this. ELISA testing can measure any antibody including IgE, IgG, and IgA. All three have the potential to cause inflammation and therefore the potential to cause symptoms in patients.

Antibody testing does have many challenges. The biggest problem with ELISA technology is when it's run by a lab that doesn't focus enough on quality control. Many labs that do antibody testing do not put enough emphasis on quality control, and therefore their lab work is not reliable.

ELISA Antibody Testing, continued

Another problem many patients encounter is when they ask a doctor who is not familiar with this type of testing for an opinion on how to interpret the results. It is not uncommon for a physician to offer their opinion or advice on what the test means, when in fact they have no experience at all on how to interpret these tests.

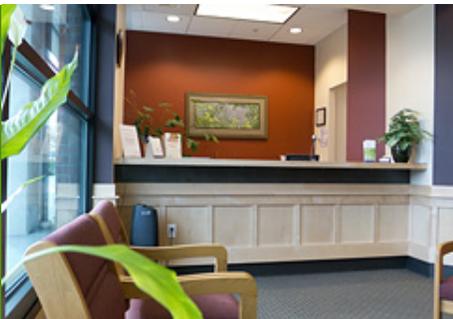
These challenges often give people cause to suspect that their ELISA testing is not accurate. However, when done well, it's just as accurate as any other blood test, many of which also use ELISA technology.

Summary

As you can see, food allergy testing is an area of medical testing that lends itself to a lot of different options and opinions. It is extremely important that you work with someone who truly understands the various tests as well as the various labs. Without consulting a professional it is easy to be confused about what food allergies actually are, and about the best testing option available for you.

At the IBS Treatment Center we have been evaluating food allergy testing for over a decade. It takes time, effort, and money to understand all the different variables of food allergy testing, but it is worth the investment because our patients are worth it. As a patient of the IBS Treatment Center, you will benefit from our years of clinical research in understanding food allergies.

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Itchy Skin Be Gone

Jack (not his real name), a 40-year-old man came to our clinic with a long history of extreme skin itchiness and stomach pain seemingly whenever he ate. He also explained that 5 years ago he had experienced a stressful job transition and he wondered if that had been contributing to his increased gas, bloating, back pain, joint pain, and extreme constipation over the last several years. Jack was extremely frustrated with his symptoms. The constipation and abdominal pain were bad enough, but the itchy skin was driving him crazy.

Approximately one year ago, a friend of his suggested he remove wheat from his diet; he tried this and noticed an improvement in his digestion. However, he also became more moody, with foggy thinking and depression. He had been taking laxatives to ease his constipation and recently visited a gastroenterologist. The gastroenterologist diagnosed Jack with IBS after a colonoscopy and endoscopy found nothing physical to explain his symptoms. Having tried eliminating wheat; adding laxatives, and a visit to gastroenterologist, Jack was desperate for answers (and relief). That is when he discovered the IBS Treatment Center.

At Jack's first appointment we performed two important tests: first, a DNA stool test which revealed that he had low levels of good bacteria in his digestive tract; and second, a comprehensive and multilayered food allergy test which identified a gluten allergy.

Besides prescribing a treatment plan of strict gluten elimination for 2 months, and some oral probiotics, we spent time with Jack explaining exactly what gluten is and the difference between wheat and gluten. We also discussed with him the necessity of avoiding cross-contamination of safe foods with gluten-containing foods at home and at restaurants. Things such as having a dedicated gluten-free toaster in his home, and speaking with wait staff about his allergy in restaurants were covered.

At Jack's follow-up visit a month later, he reported that his gas and bloating had worsened slightly over the first month as he started taking the probiotics. However, he noticed a dramatic improvement in his stomach pain, back pain, joint pain and skin itchiness within a week after eliminating gluten from his diet.

He was very surprised at how all of these symptoms could be tied together, but we informed him that it was not at all unusual for this to be the case. We decreased his probiotics to a half dose for a few weeks to help reduce the gas and bloating. After three months of an allergen-free diet and continuing the probiotics, all of his symptoms had completely resolved.

Jack wrote us recently to tell us how excited he was about his improved overall health. He still gets joint pain and mild constipation, albeit very rarely, if he accidentally eats gluten, but now he knows the cause of his symptoms. Jack said that if he hadn't known what treatment plan to focus on, he never would have made it this far and seen this much improvement.

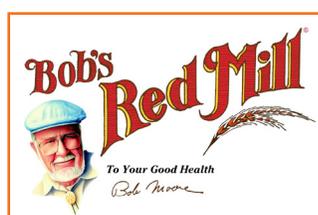
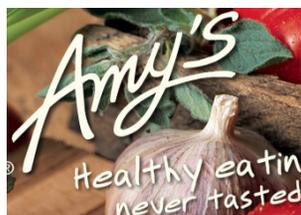
Way to go Jack!

**Do you want to see YOUR success story here?
Call now to make an appointment and get started
on your own treatment plan**

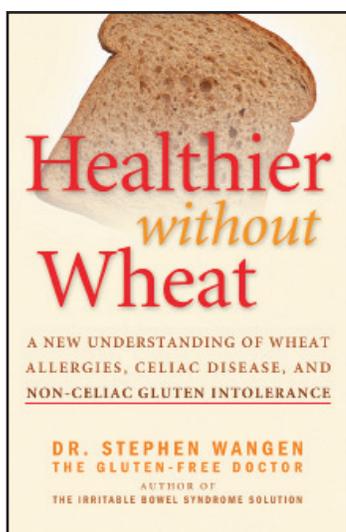
Recommended Allergen Free Packaged Foods

Here is a list of the IBS Treatment Center's favorite allergen free foods as suggested by the staff.
Remember to always check ingredient lists!

- Earth Balance "Buttery" Spreads
- Amy's Dairy and Gluten Free Macaroni and Cheese
- Amy's Dairy and Gluten Free Lasagna
- Gluten Freeda Instant Oatmeal
- Zing Bars
- Immaculate Baking Company Chocolate Chunk Cookie Dough
- Daiya Cheeses
- Nature's Path Mesa Sunrise Breakfast Cereal
- Udi's Breads
- WOW Chocolate Chip Cookies
- Harvester Brewing Gluten Free Beers
- Essential Baking Company Gluten Free Bread



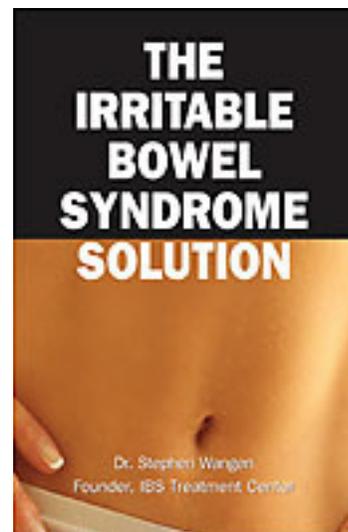
BOOKS



Books by Dr. Stephen Wangen

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