

Frequently-Asked Questions

1. Food Allergy? Food Sensitivity? Food Intolerance?

'Food allergy' , 'food sensitivity' and 'food intolerance' are often used interchangeably to describe any unpleasant experience after eating the 'wrong' foods. It could be very confusing as they share many of the same signs and symptoms.

Name	Food Allergy	Food Sensitivity	Food Intolerance
Involve Immune System	Yes	Yes	No ^[1]
Reactions	Immediate Within minutes	Delayed Show up in hours or days	Delayed Show up in hours or days
Terms in Everyday Language	Classic Allergy Acute Allergy True Food Allergy	Delayed Food Allergy Intolerance	*Always get mixed up with allergies and sensitivities Easy to trace the culprits
Symptoms	Could look the same ^[2]		

1 The University of Nebraska-Lincoln

2 The University of Rochester and University of Chicago

2. What are the strengths of HK BioTek's Food Antibody test?

- A comprehensive range of testing items, including immediate onset and delayed onset reactions, up to 280 food items list.
- Both Europe and America lab uses a highly sensitive system that could reflect your immune response in the body even if it is non-obvious
- We employed certified laboratories with exquisite detection technology for the highest accuracy
- A comprehensive testing package: A customized rotational diet guide and food family & source booklet are provided along with the testing report

3. Can the test provide accurate and reliable testing results?

US Laboratories: The tests utilize a fully automated robotic system (Enzyme Linked Immunosorbent Assay and Enzyme-amplified chemiluminescence technology). This allows you to find out the level of the antibodies produced in response to the food you have consumed precisely, providing a reliable quality assurance. All tests are conducted in a U.S. government accredited laboratory, each sample would be run twice to generate reliable and consistent results. U.S. Laboratories is an independent clinical laboratory approved by CLIA (US Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments), and the accreditation from COLA (US Commission on Office Laboratory Accreditation). U.S. Laboratories is also licensed by the State of Washington to perform testing worldwide.



German laboratory: Certification of EN ISO 13485, with a regular monitoring of the laboratory performance. This remains the consistency of the test results neither from inter-testing or intra-testing, well-performed with an extremely high 'reproducibility' and accuracy. This laboratory is also a Europe leading manufacturer of allergen reagents that with the professional research team and outstanding quality assurance.



4. How would you make sure the Dried Blood Spot card does not go bad during transport?

Before the sample is sent, the blood spot sample will be air dried at room temperature for at least 3 hours. Dried blood could resist bacterial infection. Unique collection technique employed has been experimentally proven to maintain blood quality for at least three weeks.

After repeated quality control, it was confirmed that there was no difference between the blood spot and the liquid blood sample. Therefore, the dried blood sampling method is equivalent to a liquid blood sample.

5. Some test in the market only test for total IgE value?

- When we are exposed to allergens, IgE antibodies are present in the body, and measuring the total amount of IgE contributes to the clinical diagnosis of allergic diseases caused by IgE. Excessive values indicate a weakening immune system.
 - However, when healthcare professionals would like to guide patients to improve their condition by food elimination, Total IgE may not be able to effectively identify the type of allergens. Therefore, more of them are looking for specific testing rather than total IgE value only.
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ABOUT APPOINTMENT

1. If I wish to do the test, how should we do?

You could contact us at (852) 2763 1488 for appointment. We could arrange blood sampling to our outlets to complete the test.

Our Office Hours: 10am-7pm (Mon-Fri); 9am-5pm (Sat) Closed on Sun & Public Holidays

2. What if I wish to do the test in a medical clinic?

We are serving more than 450 doctors in Hong Kong and Macau. In addition to providing delayed response (IgG) testing, we also provide immediate response (IgE) testing. Our network covers

paediatric specialists, dermatologist, etc. They are serving the clients with rich medical knowledge and clinical experience. We also provide comprehensive nutritional resources and related training to them, so that the patients could maintain a balanced diet while eliminating allergens. You are welcomed to provide us with information about your family doctor, so that we could introduce our service to your doctor.

3. How much blood sample is required for a test?

The actual sample requirement depends on the choice of test package. When testing for delayed response, only a little blood is required. When the package covers immediate response, the sample requirement increases. We would arrange blood sampling to the outlets that is close to you. For questions, please feel free to contact us.

PRECAUTION

1. Before sampling, do I have to fast or eliminate any kind of food?

Food Elimination and fasting is not required before blood sampling. Since the test measures the amount of antibody in blood, it only reflect reactions of eaten food.

2. Is the test suitable for all ages?

Both adults and children could do the test. In general, children's immune system will start to produce antibodies ^[3] after 20 weeks of age; therefore, we recommend children who are 9 months of age or older and start eating solid foods for at least three months could take the test.

³ Journal of Experimental Medicine. 1965 Nov 30; 122(6): 1173–1188.

3. Can I take the test, if I am pregnant now?

Food sensitivity is heritable. If pregnant women continue to take allergenic foods, the body will be stimulated, producing large amounts of IgE antibodies or IgG antibodies. These antibodies can be

delivered to the baby via the mother, increasing the chance of having a sensitive baby. Therefore, pregnant women should be tested early to prevent babies from becoming sensitive.

4. Before the test, should I consume different kind of food?

IgG antibody test can reflect reaction for the food eaten in the past 3 months, and the IgE antibody test can only reflect reactions for the food eaten in the past 48 hours. This test is to find out the foods that cause discomfort in your eating habits, so we generally recommend keeping your original diet. Only then can the test results reveal more clearly which foods cause sensitive reactions in your body.

However, some guests will also consider eating some foods that they usually have less exposure before testing. If you choose to do this, we recommend consuming this type of food for at least a week, which will increase your chances of detecting sensitized food. However, if you already know some foods that can cause severe allergic reactions, we do not recommend eating them again. Eating these foods can cause severe allergic reactions. If you have any questions about the test, please consult your doctor.

5. Can I have this test done if I am taking Chinese or Western medicine?

In general, it is not advisable to take any steroids (such as cortisone) before testing, because steroids can suppress the immune response, therefore reducing the amount of antibodies produced in the body. This would fail to reflect the true status of the body. Thus it is advisable to stop taking the steroidal drug for at least 3 weeks before taking the test. Tropical steroid is not part of the concerns.

6. Do I need a doctor's prescription to have the Celiac Screening done?

In general, any individual can order any tests for your health information. A doctor's prescription is not required.

7. If my kid only consumed part of the item list, could he still do the test?

As mentioned above, IgG antibody test can only reflect reaction for the food eaten in the past 3 months, and the IgE antibody test can only reflect reactions for the food eaten in the past 48 hours. For those uneaten food, there may be a "false negative" result. This is because the body has never been exposed to these food and no antibody produced against the food. Therefore, nothing are detected. In this case, some parents will wait for the children to grow up a little older and eat a variety of foods before they arrange tests for them.

REPORT & AFTER-TESTING

1. What information will the report provide?

Bar charts would be shown on the report, with different reactivity levels. Supplementary sheet and booklet would be provided for diet adjustment.

About IgG & IgA:

- Depending on reactivity level, avoid highly reactive food
- Rotating the food with low reactivity

About IgE:

- Stop eating those food with positive results
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2. How to interpret the results, and will there be any professionals interpreting the results for me?

Our nutritionist will email the test report first. Clients could choose to visit our office or talk on the phone for the results consultation. Copies of the report and other materials will be passed to the clients at the time of consultation or by post. If you have any questions about the content of the report, please call our health consultant at (852) 2763 1488.

3. I found to have positive IgG response to dairy and egg. If I avoid these food, can I still get enough nutrients?

Food avoidance is just temporary. Alternatives would be suggested by our nutritionists. For example, if you are sensitive to milk, soy milk, rice milk or almond milk will be recommended. There are multiple source of calcium and protein too. Please keep in mind that no nutrient is present in a single specific food. As long as you have a balanced diet, most of the nutrients can be taken from your daily food.

4. Do I need a retest?

After 6-9 months of food avoidance, you could consider a follow-up test to check whether you are still over-reacting on specific food. A retest could also spot out new allergens from your new diet.

5. After testing, how long will I expect an improvement?

In most of the case, if your health issues are rooted from the food or inhalants tested, after few weeks of avoidance, you could witness an improvement in symptoms.

But if your problems persist, there might be other factors contributing to the situation. After all, diet change and management is only one of the measures to address the issues, not the only measure.

6. Can an IgE test reflect the IgG reaction?

No. The reaction mechanism for IgE and IgG response is different in our body. For some people, they might be having the same reaction towards IgE and IgG, but they are not connected. According to our experience, tested clients in general are having different reactions towards IgE and IgG. If you have difficulties in choosing the right test for you, please take reference from your medical history and consult healthcare professionals. We have comprehensive package that could test two reactions at a time.

7. Some online articles mentions that IgG testing might be fatal?

Some people mistakenly put an equal sign between the results of IgG (delayed response) with the results of IgE (immediate response). They conclude that IgG test is fatal just because they misinterpret the test results. There are currently several tests for Allergy and Sensitivity available in the world. The risk associated with blood testing is not high, unless the patient has a blood clotting disorder or has unpleasant experience in collecting blood samples in the past, or other known risks associated with collecting blood samples. The skin prick test was recorded in the United States in 1990-2001 with sporadic deaths ^[4]. In August 2017, the first death case related to the oral food challenge occurred in the United States ^[5]. As of now, there have been no deaths reported for IgG testing.

4 Bernstein D., Wanner M, Borish L, Liss GM., 2004. Twelve-year survey of fatal reactions to allergen injections and skin testing: 1990-2001. J Allergy Clin Immunol., 113:6, pp. 1129-36. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15208595>

5 Allergists Respond to Death of 3 year-old Boy During Oral Food Challenge. American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology; American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology; and the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. 2017. Retrieved from: <http://acaai.org/allergists-respond-death-3-year-old-boy-during-oral-food-challenge>

8. IgG antibody test only reflect you eat? The more you eat, the higher the reactivity?

In most of the case, the body does not respond to a certain kind of food, but if it is eaten often, the body might not be able to handle that much amount and this might exceed its limit. Therefore, the immune system will gradually produce IgG antibodies against this food. In fact, any type of blood test (IgE/IgG blood test) requires exposure to a source of sensitization.

Common allergen for IgG antibody testing (like eggs, milk and wheat) are the most commonly used ingredients in diet. This makes an impression that the more you eat, the higher the reactivity. However, white rice, pork and other foods are common in Asian diet, but people seldom have positive reaction towards these foods. It can be seen that foods that have been eaten or eaten regularly are not the only factors contributing to the rise in IgG antibodies.