

Do not perform screening panels (IgE tests) for food allergies without a history consistent with a specific food allergy

Specific IgE levels can be raised without being clinically relevant or even be false-positive.

What is known about IgE tests:

- Interpretation without relating clinical symptoms may lead to unnecessary and potentially harmful dietary restrictions, with nutritional implications for children - and unnecessary fear and anxiety for the family or carers.
- Testing should be selected based on the medical history and should not include large screening panels.

How to talk with patients and parents about IgE tests:

- Explain the possibility of raised IgE levels without a food allergy (especially in children with eczema).
- Remind that there is no evidence to support empirical dietary exclusions in patients with eczema without a history of immediate food allergy.
- Highlight the risks associated with imposing restrictive diets on children.
- Educate about symptoms of an allergic reaction like rash, vomiting etc. occurring within minutes to hours of eating the specific food.
- If necessary, take an allergy-focused clinical history.

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This EAP recommendation is in accordance with Choosing Wisely recommendations of:

- Australia: <https://www.choosingwisely.org.au/recommendations/ascia4>
- Canada: <https://choosingwiselycanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Paediatrics.pdf>
- Germany: <https://register.awmf.org/de/leitlinien/detail/061-031>
- Switzerland: <https://www.paediatricschweiz.ch/choosingwisely/>
- UK: <https://www.bsaci.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Choosing-Wisely-on-IgE-request-in-eczema.pdf>
- USA: https://education.aaaai.org/pipro/choosingwisely_fa
- Norway: <https://www.legeforeningen.no/kloke-valg/til-helsepersonell/legeforeningens-anbefalinger/norsk-barnelegeforening/allergitestning/>

References:

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