

## Allergy Answers

Skin testing for allergies is more effective than ever, and can be especially important for pediatric care.

Tracy Walton's 13-year-old son Noah had a serious infection in his left ear.

"His nose was running a lot and his eyes were itchy sometimes," says Tracy. "He also had a bit of a cough and a feeling like a lot of pressure in there."

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DANIEL ROTHBAUM, MD

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"I just thought it was a sinus infection, possibly with an ear infection," she recalls. "I took him to our primary care doctor."

Unfortunately, the problem didn't clear up quickly.

"When they cleaned out Noah's ear, it was still bothering him. I wanted to see what else was going on because he

said he couldn't hear out of that ear," explains Tracy, whose family physician subsequently referred her and her son to Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat.

It turned out that the ear infection was not Noah's only problem.

"He has a lot of allergies," says Tracy. "Testing showed that he was allergic to pet dander, dust mites, and a lot of the trees and grasses out there."

### Allergy skin testing

When it comes to allergy testing and treatment, at Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat the focus is always on quality patient education and experience, assures Daniel Rothbaum, MD, a board-certified otolaryngologist at the practice.

"We work very hard in developing and educating our staff, and putting systems in place that will make the testing experience both as safe and as pleasant as possible for the patient," he explains.

"It does take a little bit of time to do the test, so you really get an opportunity to ask a lot of questions of our allergy staff. We consider it as much an educational experience as a testing experience."

Dr. Rothbaum notes that allergy skin testing is generally more accurate than allergy blood testing.

"Though we use blood testing in some cases, particularly for very young children," he says, "overall we have found



Noah is able to enjoy the great outdoors again with his family, thanks to Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat.

Noah Walton and his family

PHOTO BY MARC EDWARDS

that allergy skin testing gives us more reliable information."

He emphasizes that pediatric care is an important part of the practice, and that the staff are highly experienced dealing with children of all ages.

"Many of the patients in our practice are children, so pediatric care is a very large part of what we do," says the doctor. "We try to create an environment that's comfortable for children so that they feel safe."

He adds that there are many options for allergy treatment.

"Many people would prefer not to be on medicines for a long period of time, either for themselves or their children. We understand that. One of the main reasons we offer allergy testing and treatment is because we want to offer patients and their parents effective alternatives," reflects Dr. Rothbaum.

### "A friendly environment"

Tracy says the treatment Noah received for his ear infection was easy to administer.

"I had to put drops in his ear for

about two weeks," she explains. "Once that was done, we went back for a checkup and it was cleared up, so we focused on the allergies after that."

She reports that today Noah is doing well.

"His ear infection cleared up at the end of the two weeks, and he's just taking Zyrtec once a day to keep his allergies down," she says.

Tracy thanks the staff of Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat, adding that she was pleased with how welcome the office made her and Noah feel.

"It's a friendly environment, where they greet you right away when you open up the door," she adds. "It's good to know what kind of allergy your child has because it helps you control it, especially at certain times of the year."

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The skilled physicians at Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat welcome your call. They are located in Lake Mary, DeLand, and Orange City. Call (407) 444-5225 or (386) 774-9880 for an initial consultation at any location.

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## Allergy Drops: Convenient and Effective

Patients experience faster relief, a lower risk profile, and fewer office visits with allergy drops.

Since childhood, Charina Cross has suffered with seasonal allergies related to molds and dust. But like many children, she feared shots. "Allergy drops weren't available back then, so growing up I sneezed for half the year," says Charina.

"I would start sneezing as springtime approached, usually as early as February and lasting through June. Then again in the fall, typically September through November."

As an adult, Charina looked for solutions as her symptoms worsened. "The allergies definitely were draining me, making it impossible to enjoy doing anything outdoors. I was also getting a lot of stuffiness

along with sinus pressure and headaches."

Her family physician suggested it may be sinus related and recommended she see Devang M. Shah, MD, a board-certified otolaryngologist in practice at Atlantic Ear, Nose & Throat, P.A.

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DEVANG M. SHAH, MD

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### Sublingual immunotherapy

Dr. Shah offers this assessment: "At times, patients will choose to treat symptoms with medications such as nasal sprays or antihistamines. However, recently, many of our patients are opting to address the underlying causes of allergy and achieve long-lasting relief with sublingual drop therapy."

Allergy drops have distinct advantages over allergy drugs or injections, explains the doctor. "Drops are administered by the allergy sufferer under the tongue at home in gradually increasing dosages. Consequently, patients don't have to come to the office on a weekly basis for treatment. Also, allergy drops have a substantially lower risk of severe adverse



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reactions, such as anaphylaxis, compared to injections," confirms Dr. Shah.

"We can ramp up to a therapeutic dose more quickly. Whereas it might take a year to get to an effective dose with injections, patients can be up to an effective dose in ten days with drops."

And a major advantage for children: the allergy drops taste sweet because of the way they're prepared, so it's much easier to get a child to take them than to undergo a weekly injection.

"It's an enormous difference, so we consider drops to be a much more compelling type of treatment," says the doctor. "The risk of side effects is less, especially because you can get to an effective dose so much faster. Because of that, more patients will get to a maintenance dose, experience the benefits, and hopefully continue with treatment. With allergy shots, many patients drop out, frustrated by getting an injection every week for a year and not reaching a dose that's effective."

Although some other practices offer allergy drops, only Atlantic Ear, Nose &

Throat offers the ten-day escalation as recommended by the American Academy of Otolaryngic Allergy.

"This is an exciting new option in the treatment of allergy that previously hasn't been available," affirms Dr. Shah. "It's a great alternative, particularly for patients who don't like getting injections or who have not benefited from them."

Charina is happy with the results of her sublingual immunotherapy. "I noticed relief within the first month of taking the drops. After a year of the sublingual therapy, I find I can now jog and go for walks outside with my dog without sneezing. And I have so much more energy now."

"Dr. Shah and the staff at Atlantic were very helpful and good to work with; I'd recommend them to anyone who has allergies," concludes Charina.

PHOTO—Elizabeth A. Leib

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Devang M. Shah, MD, is board certified in otolaryngology. After receiving his medical degree with honors from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, New Brunswick, NJ, he completed his surgical internship and residency at

Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, in 1997. Dr. Shah is a member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology—Head & Neck Surgery and has served as the chair of the Department of Surgery at Florida Hospital Fish Memorial, Orange City. He is also the coauthor of several journal articles investigating the relationship between microscopic inner-ear structures and hearing function and has presented his work at various research conferences.