

## Food allergy clinics bring research-based treatments to the community



**The UCLA Division of Allergy and Immunology** offers the latest research-based care at community offices in Beverly Hills, Porter Ranch, Santa Monica, Torrance, Thousand Oaks and Westwood, as well as to inpatients at our hospitals in Westwood and Santa Monica. Our physicians are board certified by the American Board of Allergy and Immunology (ABAI) and treat both adult and pediatric patients. As a center for research and education in allergy and immunology, UCLA is actively advancing scientific understanding while constantly offering the latest evidence-based treatments for a full range of conditions that include asthma, food intolerance and immune disorders.

### UCLA Food Tolerance Program

Many patients wonder if they should continue to abstain from eating foods that they were once told to avoid due to a possible allergic reaction. UCLA allergy and immunology clinics are equipped to perform oral challenges to distinguish true food allergies. Over the course of two-to-three hours, patients receive increasing doses of the challenge food to confirm or disprove the allergy. Foods that prove not to trigger an allergic reaction can be reintroduced into the patient's diet.

### Translating from the lab to patient care

"UCLA's leadership in research and education, along with its commitment to the community, sets our program apart," says Rita Kachru, MD, assistant professor of clinical allergy and immunology.

UCLA is a Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) Center of Excellence and an active member of the FARE Clinical Care Network, which allows for constant communication and collaboration between UCLA and leading food allergy researchers internationally. With ongoing professional development, case conferences, national conferences and presentations at national meetings, UCLA allergy and immunology physicians remain at the forefront of an ever-evolving field. Community outreach includes presenting to local school nurse associations reviewing guidelines for anaphylaxis and food allergy.

"UCLA's research background and educational mission — along with our clinical experience — enable us to translate the latest scientific innovations directly into patient care," explains Dr. Kachru. "Our vision is to increase access to care and bring cutting-edge treatments to the local community. We want to offer these therapies right away, not years down the road when discoveries made at academic institutions often find their way into community practices."

Oral desensitization therapy — a controlled program that gradually exposes children to foods that provoke an allergic response — enables many children to achieve temporary tolerance. While oral desensitization therapy is effective for many people, some have dangerous reactions to exposure to food allergens. Among the approaches being studied at UCLA is adjuvant-facilitated immunotherapy, in which immune-modulating biologic medications are used to help make desensitization therapy safer, bring about faster therapeutic results and ensure greater long-term tolerance.

UCLA researchers have also been investigating precision-medicine approaches to allergy immunotherapy, looking for ways to distinguish patients who are likely to tolerate immunotherapy from those more likely to have a potentially dangerous allergic reaction to the treatment.

One alternative to oral desensitization being studied at UCLA is the “peanut patch,” an epicutaneous immunotherapy for children with peanut allergy. UCLA is also investigating the best way to prevent peanut allergies in young children. In addition, UCLA was a study site for a peanut immunotherapy clinical study (the PALISADE trial) whose results were recently published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The study was significant because it was the first phase 3 trial testing oral immunotherapy for food allergy.

UCLA is translating the understanding gleaned from scientific research into clinical treatments that we can offer through our network of community offices. We also share our discoveries with community clinicians so those who practice outside of academic institutions will be able to provide their patients with similar, evidence-based care.

## Full range of allergy and immunology care

In addition to offering a robust clinical food desensitization program, UCLA allergy and immunology clinicians treat a full spectrum of allergy and immunology disorders, including:

- Primary and secondary immune deficiencies
- Asthma
- Atopic dermatitis
- Eosinophilic esophagitis
- Urticaria
- Allergic rhinitis
- Drug allergies
- Mast cell disorders

UCLA allergy and immunology physicians work in collaboration with colleagues from other disciplines, including dermatology, ENT and genetics. The drug desensitization program is an example of such a collaboration, in which allergy and immunology physicians team with oncologists to desensitize cancer patients to important chemotherapy drugs, enabling them to receive potentially life-extending treatment.

## Program Leadership

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### Rita Kachru, MD

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