

One patient's journey: how food allergen component testing saved a lost college scholarship



The diagnostic journey with a peanut allergy

At 6 years old, family history prompted Kevin* to be tested for a peanut allergy. A skin prick allergy test was performed, and the test results indicated he was positive for peanut allergen sensitization. Lifestyle accommodations were made and he avoided peanuts from that day forward.

Kevin spent years working toward his goal of receiving an athletic scholarship to play football. His hard work paid off, and he was the recipient of a football scholarship to the college of his dreams, a US military service academy. **Everyone was ecstatic—that is, until the offer was rescinded when the recruiter discovered that he had been diagnosed with a food allergy.**

Sensitization versus true allergen

Military service academies and food allergies

For most US military personnel, having a history and risk of suffering food-related anaphylaxis is grounds for disqualification of military service.¹ And because the US military academy that extended the scholarship offer abides by the same qualifications needed to enlist in the military, the recruiter had no choice but to rescind the scholarship due to Kevin's peanut allergy test results.

Hope renewed with food allergen component testing

To help Kevin and his family have a better understanding of his current allergy sensitivity, his healthcare provider decided to order a whole allergen test with a reflex to peanut component testing.

An allergen component blood test analyzes the individual proteins found in allergens and are like puzzle pieces, coming together to form a bigger, complete picture of a patient's allergy. Sometimes it's possible to be sensitized to only 1 of these puzzle pieces—which is crucial, as each component can be associated with different levels of severity.

"My son was so distraught and extremely sad that his scholarship offer was rescinded. He worked so hard... and to hear the recruiter say, 'Unfortunately I have to rescind this offer....' It was devastating for us."

– Kevin's mom




* Profile is based upon a real individual, but names have been changed to protect the patient's privacy. Quest Diagnostics does not represent or warrant that the facts in this case study constitute medical advice or endorsement of a particular method of treatment.





The results

Allergen component test results indicated the following:

-  Sensitized to peanut allergen proteins that cross-react with the birch tree pollen allergen
-  May not have a clinical allergy to peanuts and instead is only sensitized to tree pollen
-  Without a true peanut allergy, he might not be at risk of suffering from food-allergy related anaphylaxis—and may be eligible to enroll in the US military academy

A path forward to get back in the game

With the results of Kevin's peanut allergen component test in, he participated in an oral food challenge and experienced no reaction after eating a full tablespoon of peanut butter—**suggesting he was not allergic to peanuts.**

After reviewing Kevin's peanut allergen component test and the oral food challenge, the US military academy contacted him and his family with the words they'd longed to hear: **"We have a spot for you."** It was official. Kevin is a US college football player and actively pursuing his dreams on and off the field.

The power of allergen component blood testing

Allergen component testing isn't exclusive to peanut allergens and can be used to test for allergen proteins in tree nut, milk, egg, pet, and stinging insect venom allergens.

Quest offers a full portfolio of blood testing for specific allergens to help determine a patient's tolerance level to allergy triggers. When used to create an individualized management plan, patients can enjoy peace of mind without fear of a systemic reaction and understand if there's cross-reactivity with other allergens.



For more information on allergen component blood testing and our complete test portfolio, please visit QuestAllergyTesting.com

Reference:

1. Waibel K, Lee R, Coop C, et al. Food allergy guidance in the United States military: a work group report from the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology's Military Allergy and Immunology Assembly. 2018;142(1):54-59. doi: 10.1016/j.jaci.2018.05.002

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