



INFORMATION for Patients on Patch Testing

Where and when does the patch testing take place?

Your patch testing will take place in on

What is Patch Testing?

The aim of patch testing is to try to discover whether you are allergic to anything that is coming into contact with your skin.

Limitations of Patch Testing?

Patch tests are only helpful to investigate allergies which are due to direct contact with substances outside the body. It does not detect allergies related to diet or anything which is inhaled and may result in sneezing, asthma or hives.

How do you know what substances to test me to?

There are over 40 substances which most commonly cause allergies. You will be tested with these 'standard' substances. These include metals, perfumes, rubber, colophony which is found in sticking plasters and preservatives which are found in many cosmetics, shampoos, shaving foams and creams. You may have completed a questionnaire, which can help identify any further patch tests that should be applied.

Do I need to bring anything with me to clinic?

Although it may not be possible to patch test you with the substances, it is helpful if you can bring with you in the normal labelled containers, anything that you suspect you may be allergic to, or which aggravates your rash. A list of the items and, if they are work related, any Health & Safety data sheets will also allow us to assess their relevance.

Can I bathe or shower while I am being patch tested?

You should not bathe or shower whilst the patch tests are in place as they may come off and the tests will be invalidated. You need to keep your back completely dry until after the third visit.

Should I wear something special over the patch tests?

We suggest that you wear something that washes easily. The pen may mark clothing, it is advisable to wear old, preferably dark coloured tops. At night wear an old T-shirt or nightie to prevent the patches coming off.

Can I carry on as normal when the tests are in place?

Generally, yes, but avoid excessive bending and twisting movements, as the patch test may come unstuck. Also avoid any strenuous exercise. Be careful, for the first two to three hours after application. This is when the patches are most likely to come off.

What happens if I feel the tape is coming unstuck?

If a corner or edge of one of the patches becomes loose, please tape it back with Micropore tape.

Are patch tests painful?

There are no injections involved in patch testing. However, the patch test may feel a little strange stuck on the back. If the itching is severe the patch test may be removed. However, you will need to note the chamber number which you think caused the reaction.

What should I do if I notice a reaction after my patch tests have been completed?

If this occurs, please telephone the clinic for advice.

Before your patch tests?

Patch tests are not advisable if you are pregnant. They can be performed after you have had your baby. If you are taking any regular medication, please let us know. You should try to avoid antihistamines for 48 hours prior to the first appointment and during patch testing. Topical corticosteroids should be stopped three to four days before the test. Oral steroids should be continued unless advised otherwise by your doctor, please let them know what medication you are taking.

Moisturising creams should be stopped the day before the tests to ensure the patch tests can stick to your back. Please avoid sun-bathing for four weeks prior to your patch tests as sun exposure or tanning may make the results of the patch tests unreliable.

What does patch testing involve?

You will have to attend hospital for _____ visits within one week. It is **important** that you attend all these appointments. If you are unable to attend any of these appointments, please ring the clinic to cancel your patch tests.

First Visit

The patch tests consist of hypoallergenic strips of tape. On each strip are 10 small chambers, each of which contains a different substance. Occasionally delays are unavoidable on this visit due to the preparation of these tests.

The patches are usually applied to the back and the position of each chamber is marked with a special skin marker pen.

The tests are applied to the back, which is a flat area. Therefore, the patches usually stick well. The patches stay in place for the next 48 hours. (If you have an allergy this will show up on the back even if the rash is elsewhere on your body).



Second Visit

The patches are re-marked and then **removed**, and a first reading is made. You will not normally have any further patches applied. No conclusions can be drawn from the patch test at this stage, and we will therefore not be able to give you any results on this visit.

Third Visit

The final reading takes place. The doctor or nurse will discuss the results with you and give you information regarding any of the substances to which you have reacted.

Patient Name: _____

Please use the space below to record a list of your allergies, after you have been tested.

Allergy: _____

