

Patch test clinic

Information for patients



What is patch testing?

Patch testing is an established test that can help your doctor determine whether your skin condition is caused by allergy to substances in contact with your skin, e.g. substances at home, at work or in leisure activities.

To what will I be tested?

You will be tested to around 70 standard substances commonly in contact with the skin, e.g. rubber chemicals, metals, perfumes and plants, and also additional substances depending on your skin problem. You may be tested to some of your own work or home products.

Please note: We do not test for food allergies

What should I bring to the patch test clinic?

- **A list of medication:** any prescribed drugs you are taking.
- **All ointments and creams:** you use including over the counter creams.
- **Your own products:** substances to which you may think you have reacted to e.g. toiletries, cosmetics, nail polish, perfumes, hair care products etc. Please also bring the package, if it lists the ingredients.
- **Work chemicals:** if you think that substances at work may be aggravating or causing your rash, please send the Health & Safety Data Sheets which will be available in your place of work, at least four weeks before your appointment to Cutaneous Allergy Clinic, Dermatology, Chapel Allerton Hospital, Leeds LS7 4SA. Please telephone **0113 392 4744** if you have any queries.

What does patch testing involve?

You are likely to receive a telephone consultation before attending your patch test week, to allow the doctor to decide which substances to test. If you have not received a telephone consultation you will see a doctor on your first visit. Please allow up to one hour for each of your visits.

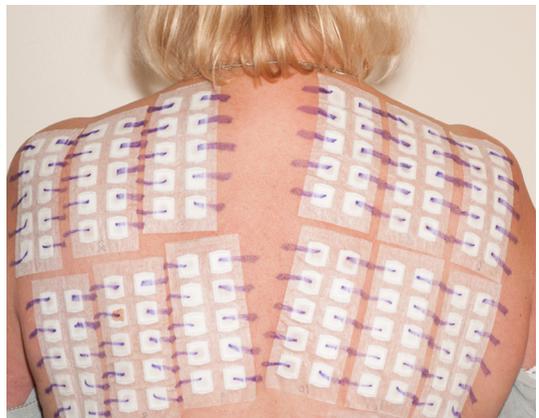
Three visits to hospital are required. You will be unable to get your back wet from the first appointment to the last appointment. If you are unable to attend all three appointments or you are unable to refrain from getting your back wet then please let us know. We will not be able to carry out the test and can then offer the slot to someone else.

Preparation at home

Please don't apply creams to your back or arms on the day of the tests.

If your back is hairy it would be helpful to shave the upper back prior to attending for testing (or we may have to do this in clinic).

The patch tests are made up individually by a nurse for each patient - before they can be applied to you. The substances to be tested will be applied in special small containers to your back and the sites marked with ink.



Patch tests applied to a patient's back

The patches and tape remain in place until your next visit on Wednesday, when it is removed, and any reactions noted. Additional patches may be applied. On the third visit, on a Friday, your back will be examined, and the doctor will discuss any reactions with you. Please allow up to 1 hour for the second and third visits. The patches may cause your skin to itch, this is normal. If we suspect a light induced contact allergy, it may be necessary to expose part of your back to ultraviolet light; this is called a photo-patch test. You will need to allow extra time for this test to be carried out.

If your Patch Test is negative contact allergy can be eliminated as the cause of your skin problem. Positive reactions become red and itchy at the test site and usually become apparent by the Friday reading, although they can occasionally take longer. If you do develop a late reaction, please contact the clinic. Sometimes substances may stain the skin or clothing; this is normal.

We may not patch test you if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, have extensive eczema on your back, have had sun exposure or used a sun bed over the previous two weeks, or are on a moderate or high dose of steroids. If these apply, phone to discuss your appointment.

Do not:

- Do not get your back wet during the tests; you can wash down with a flannel.
- Do not wear your best clothes as the marker ink may stain.
- Do not expose your back to the sun during this procedure.

Do:

- Do avoid sport or heavy physical work during the week of the tests.
- Do wear an old bra or T-shirt for the week of the tests and wear a T-shirt or vest to sleep in order to protect the tests.
- If a patch peels off, reinforce with hypoallergenic tape such as micropore. If a whole patch comes loose, remove and note the time and date.

What side-effects may occur?

Side-effects are rare, but include:

- **Skin reddening and itching:** from positive test results. This usually disappears after a few days.
- Persistent reaction: some positive test reactions, e.g. to gold, may persist for up to a month or longer.
- **Flare of eczema:** a positive patch test may be accompanied by a flare of existing or previous eczema.
- **Pigmentary change:** an increase or decrease in pigment may be seen at the site of patch tests.
- **Allergy:** very rarely, about 1 in 500 times, you may become allergic to one of the substances applied during patch testing. In practice this does not usually seem to cause a problem in the long term.

Storage of test results

We will record the information about your patch test results in an anonymised form on a computerized database and will use the results for audit in accordance with good medical practice. The data may be used for research and shared with other centres.

Failure to attend

Failure to attend your appointment (this includes your telephone consultation), without informing us, will result in you being discharged and referred back to your referring clinician.

If you need to cancel or rearrange your patch test appointments then all three appointments need to be cancelled or rearranged for a different week.

Contact details

If you have any concerns with regard to the patch tests please contact the Dermatology Department within office hours on 0113 392 4744



What did you think of your care?

Scan the QR code or visit bit.ly/nhsleedsfft

Your views matter



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