

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# What is Skin Prick Testing?

Allergic reactions are a common feature of everyday life. We all know a small number of people can suffer a severe reaction to bee sting or peanuts. Equally, an even smaller number may react to drugs that have been administered during anaesthesia, or to other products used during surgery such as antiseptics and equipment that contains latex.

You have been referred for investigation of a suspected allergic reaction.

We investigate patients who have an adverse reaction under general anaesthesia in the following way:

The most important thing we will do on the day of the appointment is to take a detailed description of your symptoms, in conjunction with the pattern and timing of events. We review the notes and anaesthetic charts (if available). These may reveal vital clues, and based on all of this we may suggest some allergy testing. We offer four different types of allergy testing:

1. **Allergy blood tests** such as mast cell tryptase (released at the time of the reaction) or antibody levels (produced by the body in response) will help us to identify the cause
2. **Skin Prick Testing (SPT)** – a few gentle scratches on the skin in the presence of your suspected allergens. It is not painful but can get itchy if you react.
3. **Intra dermal testing (IDT)** - similar to SPT but small injections are given under the skin. This test is only undertaken for the investigation of certain drug allergies.
4. **Challenge testing** – This usually requires a separate appointment and is only undertaken in certain circumstance. If it's relevant to you it will be discussed in detail during the clinic visit. It may mean that we refer you to Derriford Hospital, as we undertake a limited range of challenge testing at Torbay

**Avoid antihistamines and steroids for 5 days before your appointment, as they will affect the test.**

If the cause of anaphylaxis is found to be an allergy to a specific drug or other product, it's vital that you avoid the drug in the future to prevent further severe reactions. The allergy clinic will give a letter to you and your GP to confirm this and may also advise you on any similar drugs to avoid. This information will be recorded in your medical notes and on all the relevant electronic systems used at Torbay Hospital so that all other health care staff are aware. If the allergy is serious, you will also be advised on whether a MedicAlert bracelet is appropriate



This picture shows a forearm with some positive red itchy bumps

The procedure will take about 2 hours depending on the number of drugs we are testing for.

You will be able to drive home but you need someone to accompany you to the appointment and keep an eye on you that night.

You will need to remain in the clinic for a further 30 minutes after testing has been completed. You may like to bring a book or magazine with you.

It is recommended that you purchase some non-drowsy anti-histamines from a pharmacy in advance of the appointment so that you have some available should the need arise after testing. Whilst the likelihood that any will be needed is very small it provides some reassurance. Ask the pharmacist for advice, especially if taking other medicines regularly.

#### **RCA Information for patients:**

Serious Allergy during an anaesthetic (anaphylaxis)

<http://www.rcoa.ac.uk/document-store/serious-allergy-during-anaesthetic-anaphylaxis>

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For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.