

PATIENT INFORMATION

Patch Test Information Leaflet

Dermatology Clinic

Patch Test Contact Number: 01803 654869

You have been added to the patch testing waiting list. This may have been as a result of a dermatology appointment, or you may have been listed directly for patch testing from your GP's referral letter to dermatology.

What is patch testing?

Patch testing can help your doctor determine whether your skin condition is caused, or aggravated by, an allergy to substances coming into contact with your skin, such as at home, work, or from leisure activities.

What does patch testing involve?

Patches will be applied to your back and if additional space is required to your upper arms as well. Usually at least 50 patches are required in order to test for each of the most common and important substances that may contribute to these types of skin problems. Additional tests may be added depending on your particular circumstances. You may also be tested to some of your own products.

What should I bring to the patch test clinics?

On the Monday and Friday appointments please bring:

- **Your own products as identified by the Doctor**
- **A list of medication:** any prescribed drugs you take
- **All ointments and creams in use:** whether prescribed or not
- If relevant, please bring **health and safety data sheets** (also known as COSHH sheets) of any products/chemicals used at work

Why four appointments?

Four appointments are required. On the first Friday you will be telephoned by a Dermatology Doctor who will take a history and outline what substances you will be tested for. On the Monday you will be seen by a nurse or assistant practitioner who will apply the patches. The substances to be tested are applied in special discs, which remain in place until your next visit. The position of the discs will be recorded both by marking them with ink and with photos. Allow up to 1 hour for this visit.

On the Wednesday a registered nurse or assistant practitioner will remove the patch tests and note any positive results.

On the Friday a doctor will examine your back and discuss with you the relevance of any reactions and provide you with printed information. Please bring along all your products and data sheets to this appointment, in case they contain substances identified from your testing as causing an allergy.

Please note:

- Itching from both the patches and their supporting tape is common
- Positive results are usually apparent by Friday, but occasionally late results occur – if during the week after testing you notice a late reaction (a new raised and red area of skin where a patch was applied) please contact the dermatology secretaries below
- Sometimes all of your patch tests will be negative, in which case this is still a helpful result, as so far as we can tell this will have excluded contact allergy as a cause, or contributor, to your skin problem.
- We will not be able to patch test if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, have extensive eczema on your back, have had significant sun exposure or used a sun bed in the previous 2 weeks. Results may be less accurate if you take certain medication that suppresses your immune system and antihistamines

Do not:

- Get your patches wet until after your Friday appointment
- Wear your best clothes, as the marker ink may stain
- Expose your back to the sun during this procedure

Do:

- Avoid sport and heavy physical work during the week of the tests
- 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
- Reinforce the tests with tape if any become loose. If a whole patch comes loose, remove and note the time and date
- Contact us on the number below if you are concerned

What side effects may occur?

Patch testing is usually well tolerated, but possible side effects include:

- Skin reddening and itching: this occurs from a positive test result and usually disappears after a few days
- Strong and persistent reaction: some strong positive test reactions, e.g. to hair dye or acrylics, may persist for up to a month and blister
- Flare of eczema: a positive patch test may flare eczema elsewhere
- Pigmentary change: a localised increase, or decrease, in skin pigment/skin tone may be seen at the site of patch tests
- Infection or scarring: these are rare
- Allergy: very uncommonly, you may become allergic to one of the substances applied during patch testing. In practice this does not seem to cause a problem in the long term.

Further information: www.bad.org.uk/pils/patch-testing

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

25942/V1/Dermatology/TSDFT/03.26/Review Date 03.28