

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

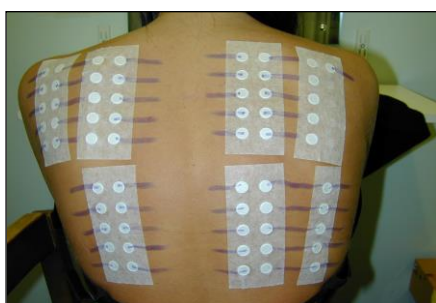
Patch testing

You have been advised to have an allergy investigation known as patch tests.

The aim of the patch testing is to discover whether you are allergic to anything coming into contact with your skin. This leaflet will help to answer any questions you may have about patch testing.

Patch tests

The patch tests are applied to your back in batches of ten and may be secured with hypo-allergic adhesive tape.



Each series of patch tests is known as a battery.

Each battery contains numerous substances, which you could possibly come into contact with every day.

This investigation involves you attending the Dermatology outpatient department on two occasions over a two-week period. All patch testing is undertaken at King's Mill Hospital:

- **Friday** afternoon to have the patches applied, which need to be **removed on Sunday**. You will need someone to do this for you at home – **please let us know if this is a problem**.
- **Tuesday** morning you will see the doctor/specialist nurse for the final reading and results of the patch test. An appointment may be made after this clinic to see the doctor that referred you for the test.
- **Occasionally patients can develop a delayed reaction 7 to 10 days after patch testing - please contact the department if this occurs.**

During the process of patch testing, it is advisable to wear a darkly coloured t-shirt/blouse/shirt you would not mind becoming stained, as occasionally the substances seep out from the test strips/batteries.

It may be necessary for the nursing staff to remove any body hair by clipping the area to enable the patches to stick.

Risks from patch testing:

- Skin reddening and itching at the application site (possibly a positive test result) – this usually disappears after a few days. A strongly positive patch test may cause a blister.
- Persistent reaction – some positive test reactions may remain for up to a month before fading away.
- Flare up of eczema – a positive patch test may be accompanied by a flare up of existing or previous eczema.
- Pigment change – an increase or decrease in pigment may be seen at the place where the patches are, which last for month or rarely (1 in 1000) may be permanent.
- Scarring – very rare (1 in 1000).
- Allergy – rarely (1 in 5 patch tests). You may become allergic to one of the substances applied during patch testing. In practice, this does not appear to cause problems in the long term.

Benefits from patch testing

There is a good chance an allergy will be found and, if you are able to manage your allergy, there may be substantial improvement or even cure.

Will patch testing detect all allergies?

No, it will only detect allergens which come into contact with the skin.

It will not detect food allergies or allergies causing sneezing, sinus congestion, asthma or hives.

Before your patch tests

- Patch tests are not advisable if you are pregnant. They can be performed after you have had your baby, if not breastfeeding.
- If you are taking antihistamines or regular medication please let us know.
- Topical corticosteroids or topical immunomodulators (Protopic and Elidel) should not be applied to the back for **three to four** days before the test. Oral steroids should be continued unless advised otherwise by your doctor.
- Moisturising creams should be stopped the day before the test to ensure the patches stick to your back.
- Please avoid sun bathing **for two to four weeks** prior to your patch tests as sun exposure or tanning make the result of the patch tests unreliable.
- If your back is red or inflamed this may also prevent the patch tests being undertaken

Do I need to bring anything with me?

No, unless the doctor has advised you to bring anything with you. If so please bring them **in their normal** labelled containers and anything you suspect you may be allergic to or which aggravates your rash.

Where possible also bring the product information sheet.

If the products are related to your work, where possible, bring the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) product information.

However, it may not be possible to patch test you with these substances.

When patch tests are applied

Do:

- Be careful for the first two to three hours after application. This is when the patches are most likely to come off.
- Keep the patches in place by using extra tape as needed. If the patches fall off completely, leave them.
- The patches will need to be removed after 48 hours, on Sunday.
- Wear a close-fitting t-shirt or vest to help prevent the patches from being disturbed.
- Wear dark-coloured older tops as some of the substances tested are an oil-based substance which may seep onto your clothing and stain. Also be careful leaning on any furniture.
- Once the patches have been removed please ensure all **pen markings remain visible**.

Don't:

- Apply any creams or ointments or wash this area until you have been seen back in clinic for the results.
- Take showers (only have washes or shallow baths).
- Go swimming.
- Over stretch.

- Exercise. This will cause the patches to fall off due to excessive movement and sweating.
- Scratch. If the itch becomes unbearable please contact the department to arrange a return visit.

Contact details

If you would like any further information or have any questions please telephone the Dermatology outpatient department (Clinic 6), on 01623 672248

Useful website

British Cutaneous Allergy Society (BSCA)
www.cutaneousallergy.org

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service:

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: PET@sfh-tr.nhs.uk

If you need this information in a different language or format, please contact the PET (as above).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email patient.information@sfh-tr.nhs.uk or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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