

## 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 that is 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, marked with a skin marker and may be secured with hypo-allergic adhesive tape.



Each series of patch tests is known as a battery.

Each battery contains numerous substances. You will be tested for at least 50 allergens commonly in contact with the skin, e.g., rubber chemicals, metals, perfumes and plants, and possibly additional substances depending on your skin problem.

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

- **First appointment**

**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**.

- **Second appointment**

**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.**

### **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.
- It is possible that your patch tests will be negative. This may be helpful in proving that contact allergy is not the cause of your skin problem.

### **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.

### **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 and 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 **TWO 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 sunbathing or exposure to natural or artificial UV light for **SIX 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
- Before applying the patches, it may be necessary for the nursing staff to remove any body hair from the back by clipping the area to enable the patches to stick.

### **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.

## 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. You can go over the marks with a felt tip pen.**

### 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 when the patches are in place.
- Exercise. This will cause the patches to fall off due to excessive movement and sweating.
- Scratch. If the itch becomes unbearable, you can take an antihistamine but let us know on the Tuesday.

## 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](http://www.cutaneousallergy.org)

## Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)  
Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:patient.information@sfh-tr.nhs.uk) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

To be completed by the Communications office  
Leaflet code: PIL202311-05-PT1  
Created: January 2016/ Revised: November 2023  
Review date: November 2025