

What does patch testing involve?

You will have to attend the hospital for three visits within one week. It is **important** that you attend all three appointments. If you are unable to attend any of these appointments, please ring Clinic 7 (01223 216234) to rearrange your patch tests. If we do not hear from you, we may not be able to offer another appointment.

The patches are applied to the back, which is a flat area; therefore the patches usually stick well. Between 30 and 160 patch tests will be done – this will mean 3 to 16 strips of tape will be stuck on. The patches stay in place for the next 48 hours. (If you have an allergy this will show up on the back, even if the rash is elsewhere on your body).

First visit

The patch tests consist of hypoallergenic tape. On each strip are 10 small plastic chambers, each of which contains a different substance. Occasionally delays are unavoidable on this visit due to the preparation of these tests.

The patches are usually applied to the back and the position of each chamber is marked with a special pen.

Second visit

The patches are re-marked and then **removed** and a first reading is made. You will not normally have any further patches applied. No conclusions can be drawn from the patch testing at this stage and we will therefore not be able to give you any results on this visit.

Third visit

The final reading takes place. The doctor or nurse will discuss the results with you and give you information regarding any of the substances to which you have reacted.

What should I do if I notice a reaction after my third visit?

If this occurs, please telephone the clinic for advice.

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient

Information: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

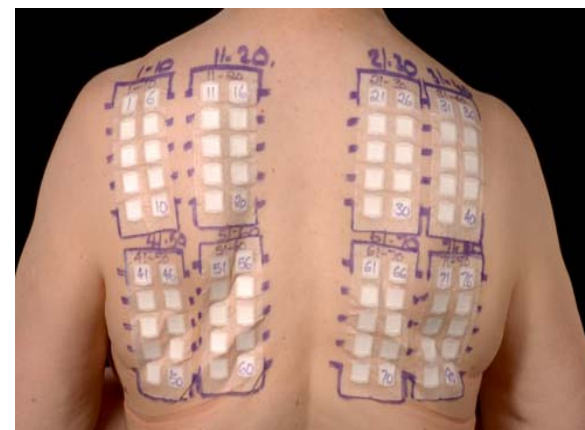


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Department	Dermatology
Contact no.	01223 245151
Publish/Review date	August 2010/August 2013
Filename	Patch_testing
Version no.	1
Reference	PIN1300

Dermatology Patient Information Patch Testing



What is patch testing?

The aim of patch testing is to try to discover whether you are allergic to anything that is coming into contact with your skin.

Are there limitations to patch testing?

Patch tests are only helpful to investigate allergies which are due to direct skin contact with substances outside the body. It does not detect allergies related to diet or anything which is inhaled and may result in sneezing, asthma or urticaria (hives).

Where does patch testing take place?

Patch testing takes place in Clinic 7 in the outpatients Department of Addenbrooke's Hospital.

What do I need to do before the patch tests?

Patch tests are not advisable if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. They can be performed after you have had your baby and finished breastfeeding.

If you are taking any medication please let us know. You should try to avoid antihistamines for 48 hours prior to the first appointment of your patch tests. Please avoid sunbathing for four weeks prior to your patch tests, as sun exposure or tanning may make the results of the patch tests unreliable. Creams and ointments should not be applied to the back for 48 hours prior to patch testing. If your upper back is hairy, it helps to shave the area the day before the first patch test visit.

How do you know what substances to test?

There are approximately 30 substances which most commonly cause allergies. You will be tested with these 'standard' substances. These include metals, perfumes, rubber, colophony (which is found in sticking plasters) and preservatives which are found in many cosmetics, shampoos, shaving foams and creams. You will have completed a questionnaire which will help us to identify any further patch tests that should be applied.

Do I need to bring anything with me to the clinic?

Although it may not be possible to patch test you with the substances, it is helpful if you can bring with you anything that you suspect you may be allergic to or which aggravates your rash. A list of the items and, if they are work-related, any health & safety data sheets will also allow us to assess their relevance.

What clothes should I wear during the patch tests?

We suggest that you wear something that washes easily. The pen may mark your clothing, so it is advisable to wear old, preferably dark-coloured tops. At night wear an old T-shirt or nightwear to prevent the patches coming off.

Can I bath or shower while I am being patch tested?

You should not bath or shower whilst the patch tests are in place as they may come off and the tests will be invalidated. You need to keep your back completely dry until after the third visit which is usually 5 days after the first visit.

Can I carry on as normal when the tests are in place?

Generally yes, but avoid excessive bending and twisting movements, as the patch tests may come unstuck. Also avoid any strenuous exercise as sweating may also cause the patches to stop sticking. Be careful for the first two to three hours after application. This is when the patches are most likely to come off.

What happens if I feel the tape is coming unstuck?

If a corner or edge of one of the patches becomes loose, please tape it back with Micropore hypoallergenic tape (available from any chemist).

Are patch tests painful?

There are no injections involved in patch testing. However, the patch tests may feel a little strange stuck onto the back. If the itching is severe, the patch tests may be removed. However, you will need to note the chamber number which you think has caused the reaction.