

# Patch Testing for Skin Allergies

A patch test is a skin test used to find the cause of possible allergic reaction on the skin.

This reaction is called allergic contact dermatitis. Contact dermatitis is a reaction to something that has come into contact with your skin. This kind of allergic reaction usually causes redness, swelling and itching.

## About Patch Testing

Patch testing is done in the Medical Outpatients Clinic by the Dermatology Team. During patch testing, different substances are placed on the skin using special hypoallergenic patches. You may be asked to bring in the products you use on your skin at home for your first appointment. They will be put in the patches and tested on your skin as well.

The patches are put on the back and left on for 2 days. Once the patches are removed on Wednesday the skin that was tested will be checked by the nurse. The final skin check will be done by the Dermatologist on the Friday.



## Preparing for a Patch Test

Getting your skin ready for your patch test is important. Following these instructions will help you get more reliable results.

- Avoid sun exposure for 1 to 2 weeks before patch testing
- Do not use and medicines like creams and ointments on the back or any other area that patches may be placed for at least 1 week before patch testing.
- Moisturisers are ok to use on the skin until the day before patch testing
- You may continue to take antihistamines before and during patch testing

## During the Test Week

**It is important to keep the patches dry for the entire five days.** Showering, bathing, swimming or excessive sweating must be avoided. You can attend hygiene cares with a washcloth or bath sponge as long as the patches don't get wet.

It is important to wear loose fitting, comfortable clothes to stop the patches from lifting and moving. Some of the different substances are coloured therefore to avoid stains, dark coloured clothing is suggested.



# Test Week Schedule

## FIRST VISIT

### Monday

The patches will be put on the back and/or arms. It is important to avoid activities that could lift or loosen the patches.

If the patches become itchy and irritating, the use of antihistamines or dry cool surfaces may be soothing.

### Tuesday

*Not required to attend Hospital on this day*

## SECOND VISIT

### Wednesday

The nurse will use a skin marker to outline the edges of the patches and then remove the patches gently.

You will need to wait for 20 minutes to allow the skin redness to settle. The nurse will then do the first skin check.

In many cases a change in skin may not have shown up yet. **This is why it is important to come to the Friday appointment for the final skin check with the Dermatologist.**

Continue to keep the skin dry, not scratch where the patches were or use any skin products during this process.

### Thursday

*Not required to attend Hospital on this day*

## THIRD VISIT

### Friday

The doctor will do the **final skin check** to see if there any obvious or potential reactions to any of the substances applied.

If you have had a positive reaction the Doctor will give you an information sheet of where you can find that substance so that you are able to avoid them in the future.

You can restart your steroid creams, ointments and moisturisers after this final appointment and resume showering/bathing as usual.

## FINAL CHECK