

Patient Information

Patch Test Clinic

Dermatology Department

What is patch testing for?

Patch testing is a way of finding out if you are allergic to anything that comes into contact with the skin from the outside. The kind of things that can cause allergies include, for example, perfumes, cosmetics, clothing, shoes, jewellery, plants, glues, oils and skin treatment creams.

Will patch testing find all my allergies?

No. Patch testing detects only the type of allergy that causes eczema/dermatitis (itchy, red, flaky, blistered skin). It does not detect food allergy or causes of sneezing, sinus trouble, asthma or urticaria/hives.

Do any forms of medication spoil the tests?

You can take your medication as usual during patch testing, however, the tests may be delayed if you are taking steroid tablets. We cannot test if you are taking 7.5mg or more of prednisolone.

Are there any other reasons for not patch testing?

We do not patch test patients who are pregnant.

A suntan can stop reactions appearing. We normally recommend waiting a month before testing if your back is tanned.

If you have rash over the back this can cause difficulty reading the patch test results. Sometimes we ask patients to wait until their rash on the back is settled before testing.

What should I bring to the patch test clinic?

At your first appointment please bring with you anything that you suspect might be aggravating your rash, e.g. **perfumes, cosmetics, lotions, wipes and skin treatment creams.**

Please bring all items that come into contact with the site of your rash e.g. **gloves, treatment creams, face creams, oils or metal working fluids, wound dressings.** Please bring small samples of these along with the material data sheets if possible. (We only test with a product if it is known to be safe).

How many visits will be required?

Patch testing involves coming to 2 special clinics in 1 week, usually on a Monday and Friday.

It is best not to wear your good clothing as it may become marked.

Are there any side effects?

Side effects are uncommon but include:-

- Itching on the back
- Persistent patch test reactions
- Flare of eczema
- Allergy: rare, approximately 1:500 times you may become allergic to one of the patch tests chemicals. This does not seem to cause any problems in the long term.

What happens at each visit?

- On the first visit (Monday) the doctor will ask you about your skin complaint and treatment and will examine your skin. Small quantities of substances are then placed on your skin under hypo-allergenic sticky tape (the patches), these are then drawn around using a felt tip pen. They are usually put on the upper back, but sometimes the upper arms are also used. This is painless, but the patches may cause some itching and can be restrictive.
- **You will need to keep your back dry from Monday until the last tests are finished on Friday.**
- On the Wednesday the patches are removed, this can be done at home provided the patient has someone that can help with this. The patches can then be thrown in the bin (no need to bring them back to clinic). You will be asked to take some photos of the back (and arms if used) after the patches have been removed using a mobile device such as a mobile phone or tablet if possible.
- On the Friday your photos will be looked at and your skin will be examined to see if there are any reactions (this visit is needed because the allergies may take several days to appear). The doctors will tell you if you are allergic to anything they have tested and how you can avoid this substance in the future. They will also help advise you about your skin problems if no allergies are found.

Additional tests

New allergic substances are detected each year. To improve diagnosis and treatment for our patients we may test you to substances not directly related to your skin condition. If you require additional information please discuss this at your appointment.

The Patch Test Clinic is held in the Dermatology Department at St. Woolos Hospital, Newport.

Please report to the receptionist in the dermatology day unit.

There is a waiting list for patch testing, so please inform the hospital on:- **01495 – 765448** as soon as possible if you are unable to attend.

For further advice please telephone:- **01633 – 238962** or **01633 – 234963** and speak to one of our qualified **nursing staff**.

For further information:- www.bad.org.uk

**“This document is available in Welsh /
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg”.**