

Patch Testing

Instructions to Patients

Patient instructions before patch testing:

1. Do not expose your back to the sun or tanning bed for at least 2 weeks before the patch testing.
2. Wear old, dark clothing as pen marks may stain your clothes.
3. Discuss with the provider which substances you come into contact on a daily basis. You may be asked to bring your own materials for testing.
 - a. Only small quantities are required, for example, a few drops or grams.
 - b. If possible, bring testing materials in the original container with ingredient list, even if you do not think it is causing any problems - provide data sheets if available.
 - c. Bring cosmetics that you have discussed with your provider to your appointment. This can include nail polish, moisturizer, sunscreen, prescribed and non-prescribed ointments, creams, lotions, etc.
 - d. NOTE: Shampoo and soap are not usually tested (these are intended to be washed off and may irritate the skin if left on the skin for 2 days).
 - e. If clothing is suspected, bring approximately a centimeter sized square of material taken from seams or other unimportant areas in contact with the affected skin.
 - f. Rubber gloves and footwear can be tested. Discuss with your provider if needed.
4. Preparation for testing:
 - a. Shower the morning of the test as you cannot get your back wet until after the second reading.
 - b. Do not put any creams or oils on your back the morning of the testing.
 - c. If there is hair on the back where the patches will be applied, shave (an electric razor is preferable) a day or two before testing (DO NOT use chemical hair removal).
5. Side effects are rare, but include:
 - a. **Skin reddening and itching at the application site (a positive test result)** - this usually disappears after a few days. A strongly positive patch test may cause a blister.
 - b. **Persistent reaction** - a positive test reaction, for example, to gold, may persist for up to a month.
 - c. **Flare of eczema** - a positive patch test may be accompanied by a flare of existing or previous eczema.
 - d. **Pigment change** - an increase or decrease in pigment may be seen at the site of patch tests; this may last for months or rarely (1 in 1000) is permanent.
 - e. **Infection** - this is rare and would require antibiotic treatment.
 - f. **Scarring** - very rare (1 in 10,000).

- g. **Allergy** - rarely, (about 1 in 5000 patch tests), you may become allergic to one of the substances applied during patch testing. In practice, this does not seem to cause long-term problems.

Patient instructions after patch tests are applied:

1. Do not swim, rub, or exercise, as the patches may come off. Avoid sweating, excessive physical activity, or playing sports during testing.
2. Keep the back dry. No baths, showers, or activities that cause sweating.
3. Do not expose your back to sunlight during testing.
4. Most patients have 3 appointments. For allergies that may take longer to appear, delayed reading 7-10 days after application may be scheduled.
 - a. Appointment 1: patch test application. The substances to be tested will be applied to your back in special small containers and/or chambers held in place with an adhesive and labeled with ink. This appointment may take up to 2 hours. The substances remain taped in place until your next visit, when the patches are removed and any reactions are noted.
 - b. Appointment 2 (48 hours after patches are applied): the patches are removed, re-marked, and the back will be looked at 20-30 minutes after patch removal. This appointment may take up to 1 hour.
 - c. Appointment 3 (72 hours to 7 days after patches are applied): the provider will examine your back and any further reactions will be discussed with you.
5. If the patches are extremely itchy, painful, weeping or burning, please call our office.
6. If a patch starts to peel off, reinforce it with tape such as Micropore or Scanpor. If an entire patch comes loose, remove it and note the time and date.
7. It is possible that the patch test will be negative. This is helpful in eliminating contact allergy to the substances that were tested as the cause of your skin problem. Positive reactions become red and itchy at the test site and usually become apparent by the third visit (final reading); however, they can occasionally take longer, up to 2 weeks. For certain late-reacting substances, a second reading may be scheduled 7-10 days after patch test application. If you develop a late reaction after your last reading, please contact the office.