

Patch Test Information for Private Patients

Patch testing has been recommended to investigate your skin complaint. This leaflet explains what the tests involve and answers some common questions. Please read it carefully and ask Dr Wakelin if you have any concerns.

Why are patch tests done?

Patch tests help find out if a rash is caused by allergy to an external substance ('allergen') that come into contact with the skin i.e. contact allergy. Examples include nickel in jewellery, rubber chemicals, perfumes (including natural fragrances and essential oils) preservatives in cosmetics and toiletries and the ingredients of medicated creams. Patch tests can sometimes help investigate suspected drug rashes. Please provide full details of any suspected medication in advance as these allergens are not routinely available and will need special preparation. Patch tests do not investigate food allergy.

When are the patch test clinics held and what happens on the three visits?

The clinics are held at **St Mary's Hospital, Paddington**. Please report to the Lindo Wing 15 minutes before your first appointment, to complete a new patient registration form. The tests require **3 visits to hospital** in a single week (see below).

- On your 1st consultation (**Monday afternoon**), small quantities of allergens are applied to the skin under hypoallergenic dressings ('patches'). These are usually put on the upper back or upper arms. The patches are sticky and most people find them slightly itchy /uncomfortable. Please wear old, dark / black clothing as ink is used to outline the patches and this can stain. Please do not moisturize your back or the patches won't stick.
- On your 2nd visit (**Wednesday afternoon**) the patches are removed and your skin is examined to see if there are any reactions. Sometimes, extra patches or repeat patches are applied at this visit.
- On your 3rd visit (**Friday afternoon**) your skin is examined again as contact allergies can take several days to appear. This visit can take place at Bishop's Wood Hospital if preferred.
Dr Wakelin will then advise about any allergies that have been found and how to avoid these in the future. You will also be sent a letter summarizing the test results.

Please note: You will need to **keep your back dry until the tests finish on Friday** and **avoid exercise** (gym, tennis swimming, cycling) as the patches may fall off or move if your skin gets sweaty and this spoils the tests. Do not sunbathe or using tanning beds before the tests as being tanned can prevent detection or allergies.

Should I bring anything with me?

Please bring any **medicated creams** you have used on the affected area and any **cosmetics / toiletries** you think have caused or aggravated your skin complaint. If your rash affects the hands, please bring your **gloves**, as it may be necessary to test you with small samples of these. If you work with **chemicals** such as glues or paint, please bring details of the ingredients and relevant material safety data sheets if available.

Do any forms of medication spoil the tests?

Please continue your regular medication during the patch tests, including antihistamines. The tests should be deferred if you are taking steroid tablets (e.g. Prednisolone) or have recently had UV therapy or are suntanned. If you are also having prick tests (to dust, pollens, cat, dog or latex) please stop taking antihistamines for 48 hours.

Are there any risks or side effects of patch testing?

Patch testing is a long-established, reliable and safe form of skin allergy testing. Possible side effects include: irritation of the skin due to the adhesive tape (usually settles in a few days), strong allergic skin reactions (itchy, swollen skin about the size of a finger nail; occasionally weepy) which can lead to pigment change (increase or decrease) or very rarely, scarring. New chemical allergies can rarely be triggered by the tests (less than 1 in 500 people). Patch tests are not usually done during pregnancy as there is no proof of their safety.

Further advice and appointments

For further information and to book an appointment, please contact Dr Wakelin's secretary Debra on **07759 236588**. Please see the website **drsarahwakelin.co.uk** for further information about patch testing, eczema and skin allergies.