

Patch Test Information for Private Patients

Patch testing has been recommended to investigate your skin complaint. This leaflet explains about the tests 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 comes into contact with the skin i.e. contact allergy. Examples include nickel in jewellery, rubber chemicals, perfumes (including natural fragrances / 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 of your tests 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 **Skin Health & Allergy, One Welbeck**. Please come to the reception shortly before your first appointment, to complete your registration. The tests require **3 visits** in a single week (as below):

- On your **1st visit (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 moisturise your back or the patches won't stick properly.
- 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. Dr Wakelin will advise about any allergies that have been identified 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 strenuous exercise** (gym, tennis swimming) as the patches may fall off or move around if your skin gets sweaty and this spoils the tests.

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 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 test for skin allergy. Possible side effects include: irritation of the skin due to the adhesive tape (usually settles in a few days), strong allergic reactions (itchy, bumpy areas of 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 definite proof that they are safe, though harm is very unlikely.

Further advice and appointments

For further information /to book an appointment, please contact Dr Wakelin's secretary **Jackie** on **07947 445 414**. Please see her website **drsarahwakelin.co.uk** for further information about patch tests, eczema and skin allergies.