

INSTRUCTIONS TO PATIENTS

Patient instructions before patch testing

1. Do not expose your back to the sun or sunbed for at least 2 weeks before the patch testing.
2. Wear old, dark clothing as pen marks can stain clothes.
3. Discuss the particular substances that you come into contact with your physician. 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 it in its original container with ingredient list, even if you do not think it is causing any problems or label items carefully with their common and chemical names—provide data sheets if available.
 - c. Bring cosmetics that you have discussed with your physician to be tested. This may include nail varnish, moisturizer, sunscreen, prescribed, and nonprescribed ointments, creams, and lotions. 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).
 - d. If clothing is suspected, bring about a centimeter square of material taken from seams or other unimportant areas in contact with the affected skin.
 - e. Rubber gloves and footwear can be tested. Discuss with your physician if needed.
4. Preparation for testing:
 - a. Shower the morning of the test, as you cannot get your back wet from the time the patches are applied to the time of 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 products).

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 PT may cause a blister.
 - b. *Persistent reaction*—some positive test reactions, for example, to gold, may persist for up to a month.
 - c. *Flare of eczema*—a positive PT 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 need antibiotic treatment.
 - f. *Scarring*—very rare (1 in 10,000).
 - g. *Allergy*—rarely, in approximately 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 problems in the long term.

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, so no baths, showers, or unnecessary sweating.
3. Do not expose your back to sunlight during the 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 within a tape 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 containing them are removed and any reactions 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 removal of the patches. This appointment may take up to 1 hour.
5. Appointment 3 (72 hours to 7 days after patches are applied): the physician will examine your back and any further reactions will be discussed with you.
6. If the patches are extremely itchy painful or burning, please call our office if you are concerned.
7. If a patch starts to peel off, reinforce with tape such as Micropore or Scanpor. If a whole patch comes loose, remove it and note the time and date.
8. It is possible that the PT will be negative. This is helpful in eliminating contact allergy to the substances tested as a 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 reading may be scheduled 7-10 days after PT application. If you do develop a late reaction after your last reading, please contact the office.