

Caring for Your Child **Patch Testing**

Patch testing is a type of skin testing that can help to determine if your child's rash is caused by an allergy to certain chemicals (allergens) that come in contact with the skin. These chemicals may be found in your topical medicines, creams, lotions, soaps, clothing, shoes, jewelry, perfumes, cosmetics, and shampoo. During the test, a small number of allergens (generally less than 45) are placed on your child's back or upper arms and covered with special hypoallergenic paper tape. Your child will not receive any injections or needles. This allergy testing is not the same as skin prick testing, which is typically performed by allergists or immunologists. We are not testing for allergies to foods, pollen or other seasonal or environmental allergies.

Your doctor may request that you bring all of your child's topical medications, creams, lotions, and other products such as shampoos, hairspray or perfumes to your child's first visit. This is an extremely important part of the testing. If you do not bring your products, you may have to be rescheduled for testing at a future date.

Before your appointment for patch testing, it is very important that you:

1. **DO NOT** receive a cortisone injection within one month
2. **DO NOT** take oral prednisone within two weeks
3. **DO NOT** apply any cortisone-containing topical creams to your back within one week.

Do not apply any type of a cream, ointment or lotion to your child's back on the morning of your appointment. Your child may bathe or may shower. You may apply topical medications and moisturizers to other parts of your child's body.

When you schedule your child for patch testing, you will be asked to schedule appointments on a Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, all in the same week.

Monday: On the morning of your child's first appointment, the doctor will examine your child's skin and decide if patch testing is right for him. If your child is sick or has a flare of the rash, you may be asked to reschedule. If the decision is made to do the patch testing, the allergens will be applied during this visit.

Allergens are applied in small plastic chambers, which are taped to your child's back, and sometimes to the upper arms. After the tape is applied, you may not get the area wet until the allergens are removed on Wednesday morning. That means no showering and no physical activity that will cause your child to sweat. Your child also must limit the stretching of his back and arms to avoid loosening the tape. The nurse will mark your child's back with a purple pen in order to show where the patches were placed. To avoid the possibility of permanently staining your child's clothing, he should wear a dark-colored top to this appointment, if possible.

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Wednesday: During the second patch test visit, the tape and allergens will be removed. After this visit, do not apply any type of medicine or cream to the areas on your child's back or arms where the patches were placed. Do not allow your child to scratch the sites. Keep the patch tested areas dry.

Friday: This is the most important day of the patch testing. At this time, your doctor will examine the areas on your child's back and arms where the patches were placed to see if they have reacted to any of the allergens. Positive reactions may look like redness or blisters and are often itchy. The doctor will give you detailed test results. You will be taught about ways to avoid certain allergens and may be given information about which skin products are "safe" to use.

During the week of patch testing, your child may have some itching or burning at the patch test sites. This discomfort may be caused by a reaction to the tape or to one of the allergens. You may give your child an antihistamine such as diphenhydramine (Benadryl) if the itching is severe. Benadryl is available without a prescription, but be aware that it may cause drowsiness. If your child has severe itching or pain that is not relieved by Benadryl, please call our office during the day at 215-590-2169 and speak with one of the nurses. After regular office hours, call 215-590-1000 and ask to speak to the dermatologist on call.

If your child develops new red areas or blisters at the patch test site during the week after patch testing, please call us at 215-590-2169 to let us know.

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