

# Patch Testing



Your skin problem may be an allergic reaction to materials coming into contact with your skin. This is known as allergic contact dermatitis. To be sure that you have allergic contact dermatitis, we can do patch testing. Patch testing involves applying a series of specific materials to your skin. We'll check the skin after 48 hours and again 3-8 days later, depending on your treatment schedule. On your first visit, it is very important to bring all of the materials which come into contact with your skin (See **Your First Visit**.) Patch testing is different than other allergy tests. It is not typically used to identify food or inhaled allergies, or allergies to oral medications.

## For a safe and successful test, please follow these simple rules:

### 1. STAY DRY!

You will need to keep your back dry at all times during the week of testing. Moisture will cause the patches to come loose and may wash away the ink used to mark the location of your tests. Instead of showering, sponge baths will allow you to get clean without disturbing your tests. When washing your hair, be careful not to splash water on your back. Avoid sweaty activities as well. Some patients find it helpful to wear a snug t-shirt at night to absorb sweat and help keep the patches in place.

### 2. DON'T MESS WITH YOUR PATCHES

It's rare for the patches to become loose. If a strip does detach and the metal chambers touch your skin, DO NOT attempt to replace the patches. This will mix up the chemicals and skew your results. Instead, remove the loose strip, and write down the day and time you did so. It will also be helpful if you write down any reactions you notice as the tape is removed. Mark the location of the removed patch on your skin with a permanent marker.

You may develop itching under the patches. If the itch is severe or if you develop pain, call your doctor. If the doctor is not available, have someone remove only the painful/itchy patch. Be sure to mark the location of the patch with a permanent marker. Try not to disturb the other patches. You may develop blisters at positive sites.

### 3. AVOID LIGHT EXPOSURE

During the two weeks leading up to your test, avoid sunlight, tanning booths and light treatments on your back.

### 4. DO NOT TAKE ORAL PREDNISONE OR RECEIVE A CORTISONE INJECTION

During the week before as well as the week of testing, you should not be taking oral prednisone. If you have been taking oral prednisone for more than a month, consult with your doctor. You should not stop taking the medication suddenly. If you have had a cortisone injection in the month before testing, it can interfere with your results. If you are using any topical creams or ointments, do not apply them to your back during the week before your test.

Your test results may be completely negative. This may mean that an allergy is not the cause of your skin problem. The test is not perfect, however, and an allergy may have been missed. Retesting in the future may help give you more clarity.

If you have any questions or problems with your patch tests, please feel free to call our office. Tell the operator that you are a patch test patient, and explain the problem that you are having:

**Daytime calls: 952-977-3450**

**Evening or weekend calls: 952-977-3450**  
(press option 7 to speak with a nurse)

**If you are unable to keep your return appointment, please call the Patch Test Coordinator at 952-977-3450 as soon as possible.**  
You will need to reschedule your test.