

# What is Patch Testing?

Patch testing is a way to check if you are allergic to something that comes in contact with your skin. It does not test for food allergies. Recently, or in the past, your skin may have become allergic to something it has touched, like: makeup, soaps, chemicals, rubber gloves, or household products.

## How is patch testing done?

- **You will have 3 appointments.**
- **At your first appointment:**
  - › A nurse will put patches on your back. The patches can be put on your arms, chest, or upper legs, if needed. If you have a lot of hair on your back, shave before your appointment.
  - › Each patch has small amounts of ingredients found in common products. These ingredients could have caused your skin reaction.
  - › The nurse will tape each patch in place and outline it with a skin-safe marker.
  - › You may also meet with the doctor.
- **At your second appointment:**
  - › The nurse will remove the patches. They will retrace the outline of each patch with a skin-safe marker. If your skin has become irritated, the nurse will record this.
  - › The doctor will examine your skin for an allergic reaction.
- **At your third appointment:**
  - › The doctor will re-examine your skin for an allergic reaction.
- If you have any reactions, we will give you information on the allergen (the item that caused the allergy).
- We recommend that you check all the products you use and any new products you buy for the name of the allergen.

## Guidelines

- Some medications may affect patch testing results. **If you are taking prednisone or methotrexate, tell your nurse or doctor 1 week before your appointment.**
- **Do not** use topical steroid creams on the area that will be tested for 2 days before testing.
- **It is important to make sure the strips stay on and are in good contact with your skin.**
  - › If the tape comes loose, use medical tape to keep the patches in place.
- Wear loose, comfortable, dark-coloured clothing. The skin-safe marker may stain light-coloured clothing.
- You can take an antihistamine allergy pill (like Reactine<sup>®</sup>, Benadryl<sup>®</sup>, or Claritin<sup>®</sup>) to help with itching before, during, and after the testing.

### Days 1 to 3:

- **Do not** get the patches wet. While the patches are on:
  - › **Do not** shower.
  - › **Do not** do activities that make you sweat.
  - › **Do not** soak in a bath.

### Days 3 to 5:

- You can shower. Try not to get your back wet. If it gets wet, gently pat it dry. **Do not** rub your back with a towel or cloth. The patch markings must be easy to read at your last appointment. Re-trace them with a skin-safe marker, if you have been given one.

### If you have questions, call the Dermatology Clinic:

- › Phone: 902-473-7194

### If you were told to e-mail pictures, include:

- › Your name
- › Your date of birth
- › The date the patches were put on
- › The dates the pictures were taken

Email: [dermatology@nshealth.ca](mailto:dermatology@nshealth.ca)

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

*Prepared by: Dermatology Clinic, QE II  
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