



PATCH TESTING INFORMATION

Patch testing is a process used to detect whether someone has allergic contact dermatitis to a product they come into contact with at home or at work. During patch testing, small amounts of chemical (allergens) are diluted and placed onto discs mounted on hypoallergenic tape and then placed on the back. The back is used because it has a flat surface and lots of room. The reaction which may occur if a test is positive is a localised form of eczema/dermatitis. The area may become itchy, red and occasionally a blister may develop. This is known as delayed type allergy (hypersensitivity), which is different from immediate hypersensitivity reactions, which appear as hives or deep swelling in the skin. It is extremely unlikely that any serious reactions will occur.

Patch tests can be negative. In this case the dermatitis is due to a predisposition to eczema, and irritation. Results are still useful if negative as allergy can be excluded. Please see www.drumderm.com.au for more information.

Patch testing does not test for food allergies.

BEFORE PATCH TESTING

The number of patches applied is specific to each individual. There are 10 discs on each patch, and up to 10 patches are placed on the back.

Patches must be kept dry during the testing. Showers must be avoided for the length of the testing (Monday through to Friday after final appointment). This is to allow reliable assessment of reactions. During testing, sweating must be avoided, as sweating can sometimes cause patches to fall off or loosen. Physical activity or playing sports during testing should be avoided.

- Do not get your back exposed to sunlight for 5 days prior to testing as this may reduce the immune response in the skin, and so the tests may not work properly.
- Do not put any creams or oils on your back the morning of the testing.
- If you have been prescribed cortisone ointments or creams these should not be applied 48 hours before testing.
- If you are taking oral cortisone (Prednisone) please discuss this with Dr Drummond prior to arranging patch tests.
- Men with hair on their backs should shave or wax it off a day or two before testing (do not use chemical hair removal products).

AFTER THE PATCH TESTS HAVE BEEN APPLIED

Care of your Patches:

1. Do not get your back wet. Have a shallow bath or wash from hand basin.
2. Do not do any physical activity that will make you hot and sweaty. The sweat will lift the patches off from underneath, and the tests may not work properly.
3. Do not scratch your back while the patches are on or for several days after they have been removed. Scratching can cause false results or make it impossible to read your reactions accurately.
4. Get someone to press the patches down with a flat hand from time to time during the day, especially in the morning when you get out of bed. If the patches start to lift, get that person to stick them back down for you. Micropore tape is recommended, which is hypoallergenic and can be purchased from your local chemist.
5. If your back gets itchy or uncomfortable, lean against something cold such as the outside of a fridge door. The cold metal soothes the back.
6. If your back becomes unbearable, contact your Doctor.

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