



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Patch Testing

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

**Dermatology Department York:**

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Telephone: 01904 726629

Opening times: Monday-Friday 7am-5pm

**Dermatology Department Scarborough:**

Scarborough Hospital,

Woodlands Drive, Scarborough, YO12 6QL

Telephone: 01723 342492

Opening times: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8am-4pm

**Outpatients Department Selby:**

The New Selby War Memorial Hospital,

Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9BX

Telephone: 01904 72 4296

Opening times: Monday- Friday 8am-5pm

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Patient's Name:

If you are unable to attend any of the appointments, please contact the department on 01904 726629, before your first appointment.

Your appointments are as follows	Day and Date	Time	Place
Application			
First read			
Doctor appointment			

## **What is patch testing?**

Patch testing is a diagnostic procedure used to find out if your skin condition is caused by or made worse by an allergy to substances you may come into contact with. These are contact allergens. Patch tests are made up individually for each patient.

## **What will I be tested for?**

You will be tested for approximately 50 to 120 substances. This includes 50 standard substances, and you may also be tested for further substances depending on your skin problem, which can include rubber chemicals, metals, perfumes, cosmetics, plants and preservatives.

It is not possible to test for food allergies with patch testing.

## **How should I prepare for the test?**

- Please do not apply creams to your back or arms on the day of the patch testing.
- If your back is hairy, it would be helpful to shave the upper back prior to attending for patch testing, if you are unable to do this then we may have to do this on your first appointment.

# What does the test involve?

- Patch testing involves attending the Department **three times in one week**, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Your first appointment can be up to an hour long.

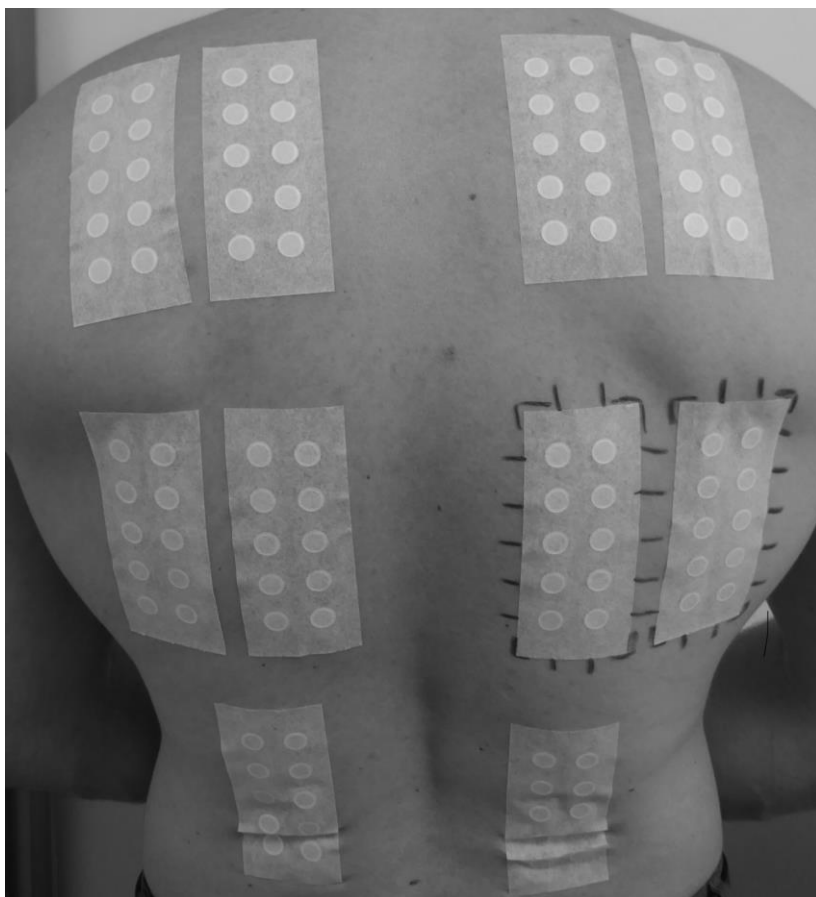
At this appointment, sticky patches containing a series of substances will be applied on your back and taped in place. This is done by a nurse trained in this procedure. They must stay in place for 48 hours.

- Your second appointment can be up to 45 minutes long. The sticky patches and tape are removed, and we assess your back for any reaction to the substances.

At this appointment we will mark where the patches were with a marker pen, this is to ensure when you come to the final appointment, we are able to see where the allergens were applied. It is important these remain visible so we may ask someone to go over them with a pen if necessary. This pen can stain clothing, so we advise you wear a dark coloured top.

If a light induced contact allergy is suspected it may be necessary to expose part of your back to ultraviolet light, this is called a photo-patch test.

- Occasionally on this visit we may need to apply further patches if early reactions are seen.
- On your third visit you will be reviewed by the doctor in clinic. Any positive reactions will be discussed with you at this time and if necessary relevant written information will be provided.



# Important Information

We may not be able to patch test you if:

- You are pregnant or breastfeeding,
- Have extensive eczema on your back,
- Have had sun exposure to the back or used a sun bed in the previous **two** weeks,
- You are on a moderate or high dose of steroids in the **two** weeks prior to your appointment.

Do Not:

- Do not get your back wet during the week of the tests, however you can have a shallow bath or a strip wash. After your last appointment with the doctor, you can bathe or shower.
- Do not wear your best clothes as the marker pen may stain.
- Do not expose your back to the sun during the week of your patch testing.
- Do not take part in any sport or heavy physical work during the week of your patch testing.

Do:

- Do wear an old t-shirt or bra for the week of your tests, it is advised to sleep in a **tight-fitting** T-shirt or vest to protect the patches.
- Do continue taking your anti-histamines if you already take them.

# What are the risks / side effects?

As with any procedure, there are risks:

- **Skin reddening / soreness and itching:** from positive test results, this usually disappears after a few days.
- **Blistering:** occasionally blistering can occur following a strong reaction. This can last for several weeks.
- **Eczema flare:** you may get a flare of your existing or previous eczema.
- **Pigment change-** increase or decrease in pigment (the colour of the skin) may be seen at the place where the patches were, this can last for several months.
- **Infection or Scarring:** this is very rare (one in 10,000 patients).
- **Allergy:** this is very uncommon (one in 5000 patients), you may become allergic to one of the substances applied during patch testing.

Before you start the treatment, we will ask you to sign a consent form to confirm that you are happy to go ahead. You can have a copy of this form and a copy will be saved in your patient notes.



## **What happens if I do not attend?**

If you fail to attend without informing the department, we will refer you back to your clinician and you may be discharged.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Katy Maskell, Sister, Dermatology Department, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, telephone 01904 726625 or email [katy.maskell@nhs.net](mailto:katy.maskell@nhs.net).

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net](mailto:yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net)

An answer phone is available out of hours.



# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website:

[www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/](http://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/)

Owner	Katy Maskell, Dermatology Outpatient Sister
Date first issued	August 2005
Review Date	July 2027
Version	10 (issued August 2024)
Approved by	Dermatology Clinical Governance Group
Linked to consent form	FYCON195-3 Contact Allergen Patch Testing v1
Document Reference	PIL346 v10
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