



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Open Food Challenge

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Paediatric Allergy Team

Allergy Nursing Team: 07984291824 or 07824452313

Secretary: 01904 721435

yhs-tr.paediatricallergyysth@nhs.net

Contents

Page

When would you do an Open Food Challenge (OFC)?..3

What is an open food challenge? 3

Are there any alternatives?..... 3

How long will an open food challenge take? 4

What happens on the day?..... 4

What sort of reaction might my child have? 5

What will happen if my child has a reaction? 6

What if my child will not eat the food being tested? 6

Can more than one food be challenged at one time? 6

Is there anything I need to do prior to the open food challenge? 7

What do I need to do after the open food challenge? 7

What if my child is unwell? 8

Tell us what you think of this leaflet 9

Teaching, training and research..... 9

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)..... 9

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats 10

When would you do an Open Food Challenge (OFC)?

Open food challenges are undertaken to confirm or rule out a food allergy. The consultant or nurse will have reviewed the history and investigations and suggested that an open food challenge would be the appropriate next step.

If you think your child has had a recent reaction to the challenge food, please update the allergy team as soon as possible as the challenge may be cancelled or postponed.

What is an open food challenge?

An open food challenge involves giving small, gradually increasing amounts of the suspected food under close medical supervision.

Are there any alternatives?

The only alternative is to continue avoiding the food. If your child will find it difficult to eat the food regularly if the challenge is successful, then this may not be the right time for your child to undertake the challenge.

How long will an open food challenge take?

The challenge will take about three to five hours to complete. After the final stage of the challenge is completed, we will observe your child for one to two hours before they are discharged.

What happens on the day?

You will be given an appointment date and time to attend the children's assessment unit (ward 18) at York Hospital. You will have been contacted and informed what food you need to bring. Please ensure the adult accompanying the child has parental responsibility and able to sign the consent form.

On arrival at the ward, your child will be given a bed space. The allergy team will undertake some observations and assess whether your child is well and able to proceed with the challenge.

Occasionally an intravenous cannula will be sited in your child's arm. You will have been informed if your child will require a cannula. Local anaesthetic cream is applied prior to this to make it more comfortable for your child.

The food will be weighed or cut into very small pieces. The child will be given an increasing amount of food every 15 to 30 minutes until they have eaten a full portion of food. They will then be closely monitored for up to two hours for any symptoms of a reaction before discharge.

We suggest bringing your own packed lunch and snacks with you on the day of the challenge then you know that everything else your child will eat during the challenge are things you know they tolerate.

Following discharge, the child will need adult supervision for 24 hours. Your child will be given open access for the ward for 24 hours following the challenge in case you have concerns.

What sort of reaction might my child have?

Whilst severe reactions are rare during an open food challenge mild reactions can occur which may include itching or swelling of the lips, tongue, throat; rash or hives anywhere on the body; abdominal pain or vomiting. Your child will be closely monitored for severe symptoms of an allergic reaction including breathing difficulties, fainting, collapse or anaphylaxis.

What will happen if my child has a reaction?

If your child develops a reaction, they will be reviewed by the nurse. If the symptoms are mild, the challenge may continue. If there are further symptoms or severe symptoms develop the challenge will be stopped. Appropriate treatment will be given, and a period of observation will be carried out.

What if my child will not eat the food being tested?

If you think there may be difficulties getting your child to eat the food, it may be given along with something else the child likes e.g. crisps, sauce, flavoured milk etc. If you do not think your child will eat the food at all then it may not be appropriate to do the food challenge at this time. This can be discussed with the allergy team prior to the day of the challenge appointment.

Please make sure that any other food you bring in for your child to eat on the day are foods they have had before, and you know they tolerate.

Can more than one food be challenged at one time?

Only one food can be challenged at the appointment. Further appointments can be arranged for different foods if appropriated.

Is there anything I need to do prior to the open food challenge?

Antihistamines must be stopped for at least 72 hours prior to the challenge taking place as this may affect the result. If your child is on any other medications, please speak to a member of the allergy team prior to the date of the challenge.

You will be contacted prior to the appointment to confirm what food you need to bring with you on the day for the challenge. This may include cooking or baking food.

What do I need to do after the open food challenge?

After the challenge has been completed, and if successful, your child will need to continue to eat the food that has been challenged at least two to three times a week to help them maintain their tolerance. If this is not done there is a risk that your child may become re-sensitised to the allergen.

Sometimes ladders are used to reintroduce food in stages, such as with milk or egg, and this will be discussed with you depending on the type of challenge your child requires and the outcome.

What if my child is unwell?

If your child is unwell within five days of the challenge date, please update the allergy team **as soon as possible**. Any illnesses, including a mild cold or cough, increase the risk of a severe reaction and the challenge will be cancelled and rearranged for a later date.

This also applies if your child has had a recent allergic reaction and had to be given antihistamines, or they have had a flare of their eczema. If you are unsure, please ring the allergy team for advice.

Local Contacts

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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:

Paediatric Allergy Team 07984291824 or 07824452313
yhs-tr.paediatricallergyysth@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.

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/

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