

Willesden Community Diagnostic Centre

Skin prick testing

Information for patients, relatives and carers

What is skin prick testing (SPT)?

Skin prick testing (SPT) is a simple, safe and effective test we use to check for allergies. It helps us find out if your child has an allergic reaction to specific substances (allergens), such as pollen, dust mites, pet dander (skin cells), mould or certain foods. We do the test on their forearm and use a small amount of allergen to see if the skin reacts.

Why is skin prick testing important?

SPT helps doctors:

- find out if common allergens are triggering your child's asthma, hay fever, eczema or food allergies.
- improve asthma or allergy management by identifying triggers to avoid or treat.
- decide on treatment including avoiding allergens or using medications.

What happens during the test?

We'll place 10 to 12 tiny drops of different allergens onto your child's skin and gently pricking the surface. This allows a small amount of allergen to enter their skin.

1. Preparation:

We usually do the test on their forearm or sometimes their upper back.

We clean their skin and draw small dots to mark each allergen placement.

2. Application of allergens:

We put 10 to 12 different allergens on their skin in tiny droplets.

We use a sterile lancet (tiny needle) to lightly prick the skin through each drop. This is not painful but may feel like a small scratch.

3. Waiting period:

The test takes 15 to 20 minutes to develop.

Your child will need to stay still and avoid touching the test area.

4. Checking for reactions:

The healthcare provider will check for small, raised bumps (wheals) at the test sites.

A positive reaction means your child is sensitive to that allergen.

Will it hurt?

SPT is not painful but can cause mild itching or redness at the test site if your child is allergic to a particular substance. This usually settles within 30 to 60 minutes.

How should my child prepare for the test?

- Stop antihistamines for 7 days before the test (this includes hay fever medications and some cough syrups).
- Continue asthma medications as prescribed (unless your doctor tells you to stop them).
- Wear short sleeves so we have easy access to their forearm.
- Tell us about any recent illnesses, skin conditions, or medications your child is taking.

What do the results mean?

- no reaction = we haven't found an allergy for that allergen
- small red bump = mild allergic reaction, which might not cause symptoms
- larger bump (wheal) of 3mm or more = positive reaction, which means your child is sensitive to that allergen and their doctor will need to confirm if they're allergic

The doctor will talk to you about the results and whether your child needs more tests or treatment.

What happens after the test?

We'll have the results immediately. Any reactions your child has will disappear within a few hours. If the reaction is itchy, they can have antihistamines after the test. The doctor that referred your child will explain their allergy management options, including avoidance strategies, medications, or immunotherapy.

Are there any risks?

Skin prick testing is very safe. Side effects can include:

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- temporary itching or redness at the test site.
 - rarely, a large local reaction or mild swelling.
 - severe allergic reactions are extremely rare, but emergency medication (like adrenaline) is always available if needed.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

1. How long does the test take?

About 30 minutes, including preparation, testing and results.

2. Can my child eat and drink before the test?

Yes, normal meals are fine before the test.

3. Will my child need repeat testing?

If their symptoms change or they develop new allergies, we might need to repeat the test.


4. What if my child is nervous?

The test is quick, and we will make sure your child is as comfortable as possible.

More information

If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider or contact:

 Willesden Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC)

 Phone: 020 370 46578

 Email: Imperial.CDCLungFunctionLab@nhs.net

 Website: <https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/our-locations/willesden-community-diagnostic-centre>

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:

imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

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