

Lung Function Laboratory

Skin allergy test

Information for patients, relatives and carers

This leaflet has been designed to give you information about **skin allergy test** and answers some of the questions that you or those who care for you may have. It is not meant to replace the discussion between you and your medical team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed. If you have any questions about the information below, please contact us.

Introduction

The skin allergy test or skin prick test is a diagnostic test that investigates the immediate response of your body when exposed to specific allergens. This can aid your doctor in diagnosing and treating the symptoms you may be suffering from.

What to expect on the day

The test will be performed by putting drops of liquid allergen on the skin of your forearm and then lightly pricking the skin to see if a reaction occurs. Once the reactions have had a sufficient time to develop they will then be measured with the entire process taking roughly 30 minutes in duration. During this time you may experience some minor swelling and itchiness around the test sites which should subside prior to you leaving the lung function department.

Allergens we test for

Air-borne allergens are transported through the air and into the nose, which can cause an allergic reaction. We test the most common allergy triggers from within and around your home environment. These include animal fur, feathers, tree and flower pollen, mould spores and house dust mite. We test 10 allergens as well as two control solutions.

Risks and side-effects

If you have already been diagnosed with asthma and use inhalers regularly, there is a slight risk that you could become wheezy or suffer an asthma attack in the 24 hours after the test. We advise you to bring your regular inhalers to the Lung Function Laboratory and keep them with you for the following 24 hours.

How to prepare for the test

We advise you to not take your antihistamine medication for 48 hours prior to the test, however, we understand that this may also not be possible. Please note that if this medication has been taken within 48 hours prior the test, the physiologists conducting the test will **not** perform the test and will be required to book you in for a later date. **If you are unsure if your medications will impact upon the test please contact the lung function department who can advise you.**

How the test is done

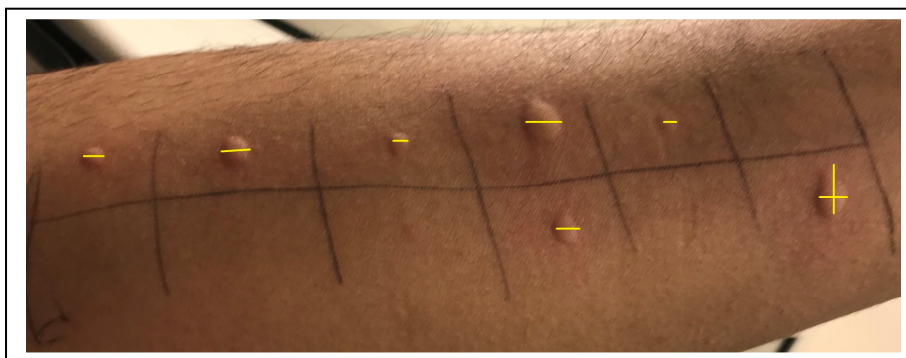
Your physiologist will start by asking you a few questions including your verbal consent before performing the test. Next, they will clean your forearm and if necessary shave it. We will draw a grid on your forearm and number it. A small drop of allergen is then placed in the corresponding section.



A new, single use lancet is then lightly pressed against your skin, at the droplet site. This allows the allergen to penetrate the outer skin layers and trigger an allergic response. Once this has been completed for all 12 sites the remaining allergen droplets will be removed.

At this point, you will be asked to wait for 10 to 15 minutes without scratching your arm.

Your body's natural defense system will be activated during this time and it is possible for a localized allergic reaction to occur. This is the body releasing histamine, which causes the release of fluid from blood vessels that are positioned very close to the skin. The result of this is redness, itchiness and a swollen lump shown in the photo below.



Are the test result immediate?

Yes, if you experience a localised allergic reaction you will feel and visually see the 'wheal' reaction as it develops. These wheals will become itchy and raised. This is normal and will settle before you leave the department.

Information and support

Lung Function Laboratory:

Charing Cross Hospital - 020 3311 7180

Hammersmith Hospital - 020 3313 2352

Monday to Friday, 09:00 to 17:00

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 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). 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: ICHC-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

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk