

Paediatric allergy

Supervised feed - what you need to know

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

Supervised feeds are tests that are performed in hospital to see if your child is allergic to or able to eat a particular food. This leaflet explains what to expect when your child has a supervised feed. Please call the paediatric allergy team if you have questions or concerns using the details on page 3.

If you decide to go ahead with the supervised feed you must book it by calling 020 3311 6611.

What is a supervised feed?

A supervised feed is when your child is fed a certain food under medical supervision, as there is some risk (although very low) of them being allergic to it. On the day, your child will be given an age-appropriate portion of the food gradually over 20 to 30 minutes. The test usually lasts for two-and-a-half hours.

What are the benefits of having a supervised feed?

A supervised feed will confirm whether your child has a food allergy or not. If they pass the supervised feed, we advise you to introduce the food into their diet regularly, generally on a weekly basis. This may help you and your family to lead a more normal life, with fewer dietary restrictions and without fear of your child reacting to that specific food. If your child reacts, they will need to continue to avoid that food and this information should be passed on to their school or nursery.

What are the possible risks?

There is a potential risk of your child having an allergic reaction to the food tested. An allergy clinical nurse specialist will carefully monitor them and check for any signs of allergic reaction. A doctor will always be available if needed. If your child experiences an allergic reaction during the feed, they should stop eating the food immediately. We will give them medicine(s) to relieve any symptoms and to stop the reaction from getting worse – this may be an antihistamine such as cetirizine or, in the case of a more severe reaction, adrenaline auto-injector (Epipen®, Jext® or Emerade®).

Why has my child been offered a supervised feed?

This is usually because their chances of tolerating the food are very high (based on their history and test results), and introducing that food into their diet may help to make their life easier.

Please take your time to decide whether you would like your child to have the supervised feed test. If you feel your child might not want to try the food on the day or afterwards on a more regular basis, please try and talk to them before coming into hospital.

What are the alternatives to having a supervised feed?

You may choose for your child not to have a supervised feed and continue to avoid the food they might be allergic to. Your child may grow out of an allergy but trying the food in hospital is the only safe and sure way to find out whether your child has a food allergy or not.

What should I do to prepare my child for the supervised feed?

Preparing your child for their hospital visit will help them understand what is happening and can improve their willingness to co-operate on the day, and their experience. Talking to your child beforehand will give them time to ask any questions they may have. Always give them truthful, factual information. You may wish to bring some familiar toys or books with you to help them feel at ease. Your child can eat and drink during the day, so please bring a packed lunch. We will provide the food for your child's supervised feed, but it is also a good idea to bring other foods they like, so that we can use it to disguise the taste of the food being challenged, if they do not like it. Only one parent will be allowed to stay during the challenge, as space is limited.

Your child must be well with no cough, cold or recent infections for at least two weeks before the challenge. If they have asthma or eczema this must be well controlled and stable. If your child is taking medications, please follow these instructions:

Antihistamines: Your child may be taking a regular antihistamine such as chlorphenamine, cetirizine or loratadine (Piriton®, Zirtek® or Clarityn®). These will need to be stopped five days before the challenge. Some cough medicines also contain antihistamine (e.g. Tixylix®).

Asthma medication: Your child should continue to take their regular preventative asthma inhalers (usually brown, orange or purple). Blue inhalers (salbutamol (Ventolin®) or terbutaline (Bricanyl®)); if your child is wheezy, coughing or has needed their blue inhaler more often than usual in the two weeks before the supervised feed, please contact the allergy team on **020 3312 6091** to discuss this further.

Please bring your child's allergy medications with you on the supervised feed day, including the adrenaline auto-injector(s), if they have any.

Please complete the checklist at the end of this leaflet to make sure your child can have the test.

What will happen on the supervised feed day?

On arrival we will explain the procedure in detail and answer any questions you or your child may have. We will ask you to sign a consent form on behalf of your child (so the person attending the appointment with your child must be the parent or legal guardian). The nurse will then ensure your child is fit and well to have the test and take their temperature, blood pressure and oxygen levels. These will be repeated during the test. Your child will then have an age-appropriate portion of the food over 20-30 minutes. We will then observe your child for two hours. If they experience an allergic reaction, no more food will be given.

The reaction will be treated as needed by the medical team who will then observe your child for two to four hours before they can go home. In the very unlikely event of a serious reaction, your child might need to stay overnight in hospital.

What will happen after the supervised feed day?

The nurse will tell you the outcome of the test and provide advice accordingly. After a negative (successful) test, we advise you to introduce the food into your child's diet on a regular basis. After a positive (unsuccessful) test, we will ask you to avoid the food. The nurse may go through your child's allergy action plans with you to ensure you feel comfortable with the management of allergic reactions. We will arrange appropriate follow-up in the allergy clinic if needed.

Contact details

If you are concerned or have any questions before the supervised feed, or difficulties reading English, please call the allergy team on **020 3312 6091**. It will ask you to leave a voice message and the allergy nurses will get back to you within two to three working days. Please note that this number is not for urgent healthcare queries. For urgent queries contact 999 (for emergencies), 111 (for non-emergencies) or your GP, as appropriate. Please see the table below for other useful contact numbers.

Paediatric allergy nurses (for allergy-related health queries) **020 3312 6091**

Paediatric allergy dietitians (for diet-related queries) **020 3312 1127**

Admin teams (for appointment-related queries)

- Food/drug challenge appointments booking **020 3311 6611**
- Main reception (paediatric allergy, St Mary's Hospital) **020 3312 1381**
- Outpatients appointments (St Mary's Hospital) **020 3312 6315**
- Outpatients appointments (Hammersmith Hospital) **020 3313 4727**

Paediatric allergy secretaries (for letters/reports) **020 3312 1257**

How do I book the supervised feed if I wish to go ahead?

If you and your child are happy to go ahead, please phone the booking team on 020 3311 6611 within 28 days of your visit. You will need to say which food they will try in hospital. If you do not phone to book the supervised feed within 21 days, you will receive a reminder letter by post. If you do not phone to book within 42 days of your visit, you will no longer be able to book it.

If you need to cancel a booking, please contact **020 3311 6611**. If you do not attend on the day, please contact the number above as soon as possible. Otherwise, you will not be able to rebook the supervised feed.

Pre-test checklist:

Please complete the checklist the day before the supervised feed and bring it with you on the day.

| Pre-test checklist | Yes | No |
|--|-----|----|
| My child* and I understand why the test has been advised | | |
| My child* and I understand the benefits and risks of the test | | |
| My child* and I are happy to go ahead with the test | | |
| My child is happy to eat the food on the challenge day, and if tolerated, on a regular basis thereafter | | |
| My child has not taken any antihistamines for five days before the challenge | | |
| My child has not been unwell in the two weeks before the challenge (e.g. with fever, a cold, a sore throat, tummy bug or a flare of their asthma, hay fever or eczema) | | |
| I'll bring my child's allergy medications on the day (including an adrenaline pen, if they have one) | | |
| If trying baked egg or baked milk, I have baked the muffins and will bring them on the day | | |

*(if old enough)

How do I make a comment about my visit?

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. Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department: Fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY. Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net or 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.patient.information@nhs.net

Wi-fi

We have a free wi-fi service for basic filtered browsing and a premium wi-fi service (requiring payment) at each of our five hospitals. Look for WiFiSPARK_FREE or WiFiSPARK_PREMIUM