

# Patient Guide to Patch Testing

## Q & A



## What is allergic contact dermatitis?



This is a skin reaction that occurs when you touch or come in close contact with substances to which you are allergic. Your skin can become itchy, cracked, red, sore and may even bleed. The substances that cause this reaction are referred to as allergens and can be an ingredient in your shampoo, soap, makeup, aftershave, jewelry, medication and your clothing. You may also have a reaction to an allergen in your workplace because allergens are common in cleaning supplies, paper and ink, disinfectants, construction materials and rubber products.

## How will I know what is causing my allergy?



Your provider may give you a patch test to identify potential allergens. Patch testing is a reliable, safe, and easy way to diagnose the cause of your specific allergic contact dermatitis. Your provider will apply a panel or series of panels containing allergens to your body. Each chamber will contain a different allergen, and each panel can contain up to 12 individual chambers.

## How does it work?



You will wear the patches applied by your provider, most likely on your back, for 2 days. During this time you should not remove the panels unless your provider tells you to do so. After 48 hours, you will return to your provider's office to have the panels removed. Allergic reactions are sometimes seen at this point; however, your provider will need to see you again for a second reading 2-5 days after the patches are removed to ensure an accurate diagnosis. Your provider will discuss the results of your patch test at this time. Your provider should also be able to inform you of substances that you should avoid and ways that you can prevent future contact with that substance.

*Please note: It's important to allow the allergens to maintain contact with your skin for 48 hours to obtain an accurate reading. Panels that are removed or damaged will require a complete retest.*

## Contact us.

To learn more about allergic contact dermatitis,

VISIT [smartpractice.com/dermatology](http://smartpractice.com/dermatology)

CALL 800.878.3837



# Frequently asked questions



## 1 How should I prepare for patch testing?

On the day of patch placement, you should arrive with a clean, dry back. Prior to placement, discuss with your provider any medications (prescription or over-the-counter) you're currently taking. Your provider may advise you to avoid systemic steroids for a period of time leading up to your patch test to avoid inaccurate test results.

## 2 What will I be tested with?

Every case of allergic contact dermatitis is unique, and the allergens you are tested with will depend on your health history and exposure risks. Your provider will take a detailed history to help select the allergens to which you will be tested. Some of the most common types of allergens used for patch testing include metals (nickel, cobalt, chromium); rubber chemicals; preservatives, which are found in many personal care and cosmetic products; fragrances; and medicinal substances such as antibiotics and topical corticosteroids.

## 3 What should I do if my skin itches or burns while wearing the patch tests?

Itching and burning sensations are common side effects. Try not to scratch the patch test area. Scratching can irritate your skin and may make the itching worse. It can also decrease your provider's ability to interpret your test results. Try using pressure (*EX: press against a door jam*) or applying a cold, dry cloth or material (no ice) to the affected area.

If the itching and burning become severe, contact your provider immediately.

## 4 What should I do if my patch starts to come off?

Your provider may have applied a tape or covering over your test panels. If, however, the panel becomes loose, you can use a hypoallergenic tape to reattach it to your skin. Apply the tape only around the outside edge of the panels.

## 5 Can I shower?

You should minimize your exposure to water by ensuring your patches stay dry. Even after the patches are removed, you will need to limit showering and avoid scrubbing the test site until after the final reading.

## 6 Can I go to the gym?

Until final reading day, avoid perspiration from physical activity or heat. For optimal test results, you should refrain from excessive perspiration, heat and UV light (sun exposure).

## 7 What will a positive reaction look like?

Your provider will review your results when the patch test(s) are removed. Positive reactions range from a small skin rash with a little swelling to red, blistered skin.



## 8 How long will this testing take?

Usually your patches will remain in place on your skin for 2 days (48 hours). After this time, your provider will remove the patches and will set an appointment for you to return in 2-5 days. Most reactions occur within this period; however, some reactions can take as long as 10 days to appear. Your provider will be able to tell you how long it will likely take to complete your testing based on your history and the allergens that are being tested.

## 9 What if my results are negative?

Negative results are possible. Patch testing helps to narrow the potential allergens that are causing your reaction. If you test negative on the initial testing, your provider may have to test you again with different substances. This process of elimination will continue until your specific allergen(s) is identified. 35 of the most common allergens cause 80% of all allergic contact dermatitis.

# Follow-up appointments

It is important for you to attend all of your follow-up appointments.

Please find your schedule below.

## Patch Placement

DAY	DATE	TIME
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## Patch Removal/1st Reading

DAY	DATE	TIME
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## 2nd Reading

DAY	DATE	TIME
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## 3rd Reading (if necessary)

DAY	DATE	TIME
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## 4th Reading (if necessary)

DAY	DATE	TIME
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