

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 the Lung Function Lab.

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

You will be seen by a member of the respiratory physiology team.

The test is done 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 be measured.

The entire process takes about 30 minutes.

During this time, you may experience some minor swelling and itchiness around the test sites. This should come to a stop before you leave the lung function department.

A family member, carer or friend can accompany you for the test if you would like them to. A chaperone can also be provided. If you have any questions about this, or think you may need a translator, please contact the relevant department using one of the telephone numbers at the end of this leaflet.

Allergens we test for

Airborne 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 grass pollen
- mould spores
- house dust mites.

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 Lab and keep them with you for the following 24 hours.

How to prepare for the test

The test cannot go ahead if you have taken antihistamine in the previous 48 hours. So, stop taking your antihistamine medication 48 hours before your test. We understand that sometimes this may not be possible. In this case, please contact the Lung Function Lab and we will rebook your test for a later date.

If you are not sure if your medication will affect the test, please check with the Lung Function Lab.

How the test is done

The physiologist (healthcare science staff) will start by asking you a few questions. This includes asking for your verbal consent before performing the test.

Next, they will clean your forearm and if necessary, shave it.

They will draw a grid on your forearm and number it. A small drop of allergen is then placed in the corresponding section (see picture below).



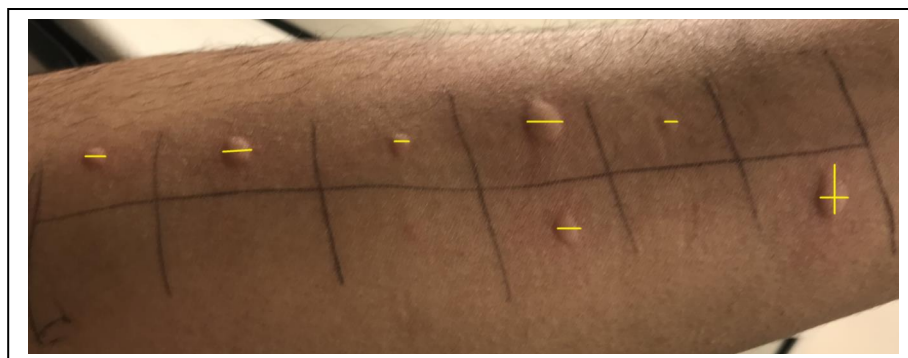
A new, single-use blade (lancet) is then lightly pressed against your skin, at the droplet site. This allows the allergen to go through the outer skin layers and trigger an allergic response.

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 defence system will be activated during this time, and it is possible for a localised 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 results immediate?

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

Useful contacts

Your appointment letter will tell you which hospital the test is booked at. The telephone numbers for each site are listed below.

Lung Function Lab numbers:

Charing Cross Hospital	020 3311 7180
Hammersmith Hospital	020 3313 2352
Willesden Community Diagnostic Centre	020 3704 6578

If you need to change your outpatient appointment with the doctor/nurse you need to call the outpatient booking office on 020 3313 5000.

For information about accessing our hospital sites, including public transport and parking information, please visit the Trust's website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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: 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

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