



**HUDSON**  
SKIN ALLERGY INSTITUTE

# PATIENT GUIDE: PATCH TESTING

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## CONTACT DERMATITIS FAQs

### WHAT IS CONTACT DERMATITIS?

Contact dermatitis is a rash caused by a substance you're exposed to that irritates your skin (irritant contact dermatitis) or causes an allergic reaction (allergic contact dermatitis).

### WHAT IS IRRITANT CONTACT DERMATITIS?

Irritant contact dermatitis (ICD) is a skin irritation that occurs shortly after (within minutes or hours) contact with a substance (for example- harsh skin care products, soaps, household cleaners). The main symptom is burning, stinging or pain.

### WHAT IS ALLERGIC CONTACT DERMATITIS?

Allergic contact dermatitis (ACD) is a rash caused by an allergic reaction to a chemical that touches your skin. The rash typically develops days after contact with an allergen, not immediately, which makes it difficult to trace the source. Common contact allergens include ingredients in cosmetics (e.g. fragrances, preservatives), rubber, metals (most commonly nickel), plants or dyes.

## WHAT IS PATCH TESTING?

Once a diagnosis of allergic contact dermatitis is suspected, a patch test should be performed. Dr. Lazić will provide a personalized consultation in which she decides what to test you for, and will schedule your patch test. With this type of allergy testing, Dr. Lazić can help determine what you are allergic to, so that you know what ingredients to avoid in products.

Patch testing is used to assess your skin's reaction to a variety of substances with which you come in contact at home, at work, or during recreational activities. It involves applying a purified allergen to your skin to see if it causes an allergic reaction. Typically, 8 to 10 hypoallergenic stickers are placed on the back for about 48 hours, at which point they are removed and the back is marked with a surgical pen. Around 72-96 hours from application of the patches, results are analyzed. The back must remain dry throughout the testing process. There are no needles or "pricking" used in this form of allergy testing (note that patch testing is not the same as prick testing, which is a different type of allergy test used to diagnose hay fever or food allergies).

Once we've identified the causes of the allergic reaction, we provide you with the name of the ingredients, as well as any aliases that may be used by various manufacturers, so you know what to look for when shopping for new products. We also provide a customized list of products that are safe to use via the CAMP Program. We typically will schedule a follow up about 4-6 weeks after the patch test to ensure that your skin condition has improved or resolved with allergen avoidance. With patch testing, we can potentially provide a cure for your skin condition, rather than just managing it long term with creams and other medications.



# PATCH TEST INSTRUCTIONS

patch testing consists of 3 visits

## DAY 0: APPLICATION OF PATCHES

DATE	TIME
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Typically done on a Monday, we place the adhesive patches on your back. Please shower on Monday morning prior to your visit, but do NOT apply any lotions/ perfume/ medicated creams or any other products on your back.

After the patches are placed, please DO NOT GET YOUR BACK WET until (ideally) Thursday evening, after the last visit. If you need to take a shower on Wednesday evening, please do not scrub the back, in order to preserve the pen markings. Sponge baths are preferable at this point. Furthermore, the patches must remain firmly adherent to your skin; exercise and other activities which may loosen the patches are discouraged.

## DAY 2 (48 HRS): REMOVAL OF PATCHES

DATE	TIME
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Typically on a Wednesday, we remove the adhesive patches from your back, and mark your back with a surgical marker/sharpie to identify the location of individual allergens. Since your back will be somewhat sticky and marked, you may wish to BRING AN OLD DARK T-SHIRT, as the ink can rub off on clothing. These pen markings must remain dry until Thursday's final visit.

## DAY 3 OR 4 (72-96 HRS): INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

DATE	TIME
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Typically, on a Thursday afternoon, a discussion of test results will take place. You can resume all your activities (showering/exercising) after this visit.

## ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT NOTES

1. Should the patch/adhesive tape become loose, apply additional tape to reattach the edges to the original area.
2. Avoid scratching the areas as this may interfere with the results. If you feel itchy, you may take an antihistamine (Allegra/Zyrtec/Claritin during the day, Benadryl at night). Do not apply any creams/medications to your back.
3. Do not expose the area to the sun/UV light during the testing or a week prior, as this may interfere with the results.
4. In order to obtain accurate patch test results, please stop taking any oral steroids (Prednisone) 4 weeks prior to patch testing. Also, avoid using prescriptions creams/ointments on your back for at least 7 days preceding the patch test (may be used on other affected areas of the body, but not the back).
5. Occasionally, some patients may have vigorous reactions to some substances. This may result in local discomfort, which can be treated at the follow-up appointment. In addition, some of the chemicals (allergens) can temporarily stain the skin; this will fade with time.
6. Rarely, you may observe a reaction at the test site as late as 3 weeks after your visit. If this happens, please report it as it may be an important result.

## PATCH TEST POSITIVE REACTIONS



WEAK POSITIVE



STRONG POSITIVE



EXTREME POSITIVE

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL OR EMAIL OUR OFFICE:**

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