



## Patch Testing

Your provider may order a patch test to identify potential allergens. Patch testing is a reliable, safe, and easy way to diagnose the cause of your specific dermatitis. Your provider will have a series of panels applied to your body. Each chamber will contain a different allergen, and each panel can contain up to 10 chambers.

You will wear the patches applied in the office, 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 the 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, typically 2 days after the patches are removed, to ensure an accurate diagnosis. Your provider will discuss the results of the 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.

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. *You will need to avoid systemic steroids (oral prednisone) for one week prior to your patch test application and do not use any topical steroids on or near the area being patch tested to avoid inaccurate results. If you take antihistamines, you do not need to stop these.*
- 2. What will I be tested with?** 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; and fragrances.
- 3. What should I do if my skin itches or burns while wearing the patches?** 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 (press against a door jamb) 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 patches start 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).

**If you have any questions please call our office at 336-940-2407.**