

Patient information factsheet

Photopatch testing

We have given you this factsheet because your dermatology (skin) doctor has referred you for photopatch testing for your skin condition. It explains what photopatch testing is, why you need it, and the risks and benefits. We hope it will help to answer any questions you may have. If you have any further questions, please speak to a member of the team using the contact details at the end of the factsheet.

What is photopatch testing?

Photopatch testing is a series of tests to find out whether you are allergic to common ingredients in sunscreens or cosmetics when you are in sunlight.

There are two parts to your allergy testing: 'patch testing' where we look at allergies to ingredients that are applied to the skin (sunscreens), and 'photo testing' where we look into allergies caused by ultraviolet (UV) light. Photopatch testing combines both tests.

Before your photopatch testing

You should:

- make sure that you have the week free to attend all your appointments
- let us know in advance if you take immunosuppressant medication such as ciclosporin, prednisolone, azathioprine or an injectable treatment for your skin condition (biologics)

You should not:

- sunbathe in the four weeks before your testing
- engage in physical activity such as sports or gardening during your photopatch testing week
- throw away any products that you think may have caused a reaction
- expose your skin to sunlight for a week during your treatment

Please bring any products that you use regularly so that we can test them.

Your photopatch testing week

You will have three appointments during your photopatch testing week. You may also have additional tests during this week. You should wear a close weave, dark-coloured, long sleeve, front buttoning top and trousers to all three of your appointments.

Monday

On Monday, please come to the dermatology department for your first appointment. We will need to check whether your skin is sensitive to ultraviolet A (UVA) light. A specialist nurse will then take you to the ultraviolet light treatment room and give you protective goggles and a visor to wear.

We will ask you to stand in a cubicle around the same size as a shower cubicle, where we will give you a test dose of UVA light. This will take approximately 20 minutes.

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After this, the specialist nurse will take you to the patch test clinic room where they will apply a small amount of each patch test allergen using plasters on your upper and middle back. This process should take approximately 30 minutes.

You will need to keep these plasters on for 48 hours. You will not be able to shower or do any significant physical activity or exercise during this period.

Wednesday

On Wednesday, you will take off the plasters from the patch testing and top up the lines with a marker pen at home.

You will need to come back to the dermatology department. We will take you to the ultraviolet light treatment room where you will have a dose of UVA light shone onto the skin over half of the removed patches on your upper back. Only half of the removed patches are exposed because a reaction to allergens may be triggered by exposure to UV light. To prove this, we will apply two sets of allergens, one with exposure to UV light and one not exposed.

Friday

On Friday, you will go back to the patch test room where we will check your reactions to the patches for the final time.

The consultant will check your results and suggest any treatments, if needed. The consultant may also decide whether you will need further testing.

Contact us

You can contact the teams below if you cannot attend your appointment or if you have any questions. If you cannot attend your appointment, please let us know in advance.

Booking administrator: **023 8120 2937** (8am to 5pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 2pm Thursday)

Patch test nurses: **023 8120 2871** (8am to 5pm Monday to Friday, 8am to 2pm Thursday)

Email: dermatologynurseled@uhs.nhs.uk

Dermatology

E Level
Fanshawe Wing
Royal South Hants Hospital
Southampton
Hampshire
SO14 0YG

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