

Skin Prick Testing: Your Questions Answered

What is skin prick testing?

Skin prick testing is an allergy test. It can be performed on children from about 4 months of age. The results are available within 15 minutes which is useful as it allows the allergy team to discuss the results with you as part of this clinic visit. If your child has had any medication within the past week please let us know as some medicines can affect the test.

Is the test dangerous or will it upset my child?

The procedure is extremely safe as reactions are very rare, 1 child in 100,000 may have a reaction. It is relatively painless, however, some children do find it distressing. We encourage you to let us know if your child

- Has found hospital procedures distressing in the past
- Is afraid of needles
- Has previously become faint or unwell during or after a hospital procedure.

We recommend that siblings do not attend in the skin testing room as parents can focus on the needs of their child during the test. If two children from the same family need testing then it is best that two parents / carers are available on the day of testing. We are happy to discuss rescheduling the testing for another day.

What does testing involve?

The Allergy Nurse will use a pen to write on your child's lower arm, the names of the tests to be performed. The nurse will place a droplet of each allergen on the arm and scratch each one once with a lancet, a small pointed tool. The drops are then wiped away. The nurse records the time and will ask you to sit in the waiting area with your child for 15 minutes. During this time, your child's arm may become itchy.

Reassure them and tell them it is ok for them to rub their arm with the palm of their hand. Do not allow your child to scratch with their fingertips as furious rubbing could cause enough redness to interfere with the test results.



After 15 minutes, the nurse will examine your child's arm and measure the size of any allergic hives that have come up. The nurse will record the numbers in your child's case notes and let the doctor know that the testing is complete. The doctor will call you back in to discuss the results as soon as they are free. If your child's arm is extremely itchy we can give them some anti histamine.

Please Turn Over the Sheet



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What do the test results mean?

The test results are actually quite tricky to interpret. One thing is certain, however; positive results do not explain why your child has eczema. Eczema is not an allergy. A positive test may mean that a particular food will cause your child to have an immediate allergic reaction and the doctor will discuss this with you.

Skin test results cannot tell how severe your child's reaction to a food will be. The reaction that they have depends on many things including how much they eat and how the food was prepared. Remember our team are very reluctant to remove any foods from your child's diet unless absolutely necessary.

If you have questions about any of the points raised on this sheet please ask your nurse or doctor.