



# Patch, Photo-Patch & Photo Tests



Changi  
General Hospital  
SingHealth

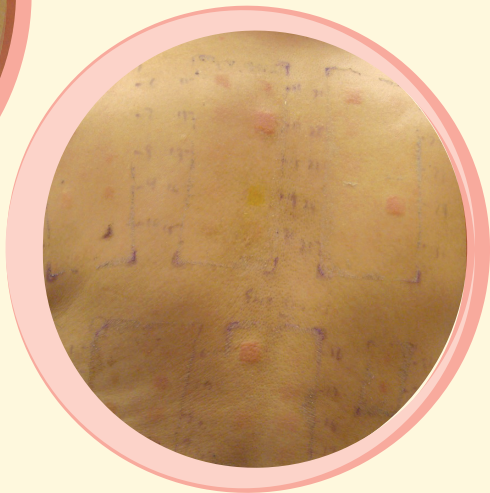
# What is a patch test?

Some people are allergic to certain substances (allergens) that come into contact with their skin. Patch testing aims to find out what these substances are. Examples of such allergens include metals, fragrances, preservatives, topical medications, leather, cement, rubber, hair dye, sunscreens and plants. Patch testing is not used to detect allergens that cause food allergies, hives, asthma and allergic rhinitis.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Patches applied in the clinic	Leave patches in place	Remove patches at home	Return to the clinic for patch test reading



Top: Patches applied  
Right: Patch test reading showing some allergic reactions



# What is a photopatch test?

A photopatch test is carried out to diagnose photoallergic contact dermatitis. This is a form of contact dermatitis caused by a combination of certain allergens and ultraviolet light (e.g., sunlight).

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Patches applied in the clinic	Leave patches in place	Remove patches and expose area to light source in the clinic	Return to the clinic for patch test reading

# How are the patch and photopatch tests carried out?

Patches of possible allergens will be marked in ink and plastered to the skin (usually on the back) for two days. For the photopatch test, some of the patches will be exposed to a light source in the clinic on the third day. On the fourth day, patients will return to the clinic for a doctor's review.

# Complications of patch testing

Depending on the degree of allergy to the test substances, itch, irritation to the plaster, blistering, generalised redness covering the back, scars, eczema flares, or lightening or darkening of your skin may occur. Prolonged or delayed reactions are possible with certain allergens. On rare occasions, other types of more severe reactions may develop.

# Preparation for the patch and photopatch tests

1. Inform your doctor if you are taking any medication. Some medications (e.g., oral steroids) may need to be stopped before the test. Your doctor will also discuss your topical or oral medication regime before your patch test.
2. Do not expose the test area to ultraviolet light or the sun for at least four weeks before the test.
3. Please shower before coming to the clinic, and avoid applying creams, moisturisers or powder over the test area after your shower. It will be good to come in an old, dark-coloured shirt that opens at the front.

## Please observe the following during the test:

1. The patches should be left in place for 48 hours in direct contact with the skin. Wear a shirt to sleep to protect the patches.
2. Avoid swimming or getting the test sites wet during showers or baths throughout the four days of testing. You may pat the test sites dry with paper towels.
3. Avoid sports or heavy physical work.
4. Avoid exposing the patches to ultraviolet light or the sun.
5. Do not scratch or rub the back, as this may give a false positive reaction. You can take oral antihistamines at their recommended doses if you develop an itch. If the itch becomes unbearable with severe redness over the test area, you may remove the patches but please note down the date and time that the patches were removed.
6. If the patches become loose, please use adhesive tape to refasten them in the same place.
7. Please remove the patches on your own after 48 hours on:  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_
8. For the photopatch test, please return to the clinic for the light exposure session on:  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Please return to the clinic for your review on:  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_



# What is a photo test?

The photo test is done to establish how sensitive the skin is to ultraviolet light. The test is done by exposing the test area (e.g., back or buttock), which will be marked out in ink, to different wavelengths of light. Please avoid scratching the test area and exposing it to sunlight. You will need to return to the clinic for a review with the doctor after 24 hours.



Day 1	Day 2
Exposure to light source	Reading done in clinic



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Please do not disregard the professional advice of your doctor.