



# Patch Testing

California – Fremont, Oakland, Redwood City · Idaho – Eagle · Oregon – Beaverton, Clackamas, Gresham, McMinnville, Newberg, Tigard · Washington – Bellevue, Fisher's Landing, Longview, Salmon Creek

## What is Patch Testing?

Patch testing is used to test for type IV allergic reactions. A type IV reaction is a delayed allergic reaction that normally appears within 9-96 hours after exposure to the substance. A common type IV reaction is the rash that develops from poison ivy. This same type of rash can develop from metals, perfumes, dyes, chemicals, beauty products, and much more. Patch testing can be very helpful in determining the cause of skin rashes and reactions that occur when an allergen touches the skin. This test uses an adhesive patch containing the substances you may be allergic to that is applied directly to your skin, usually on your back.

We offer the American Core Allergen Series patches, which includes 80 chemicals/metals that commonly cause reactions. Our staff is also able to create custom patches to test for specific substances that are suspected to have caused a reaction. Your provider will use your medical history to determine the best option for you during your office visit.

## What to Expect?

Three office visits are required for patch testing:

1. The first visit must be scheduled on a Monday or Tuesday for the initial application of the patches. This is a nurse visit.
2. The second office visit will take place 48 hours after the initial application of the patches. At this appointment, your patches will be removed, and an initial reading of the results will be performed by your nurse.
3. The third office visit will take place 72 hours after the initial application of the patches. At this visit, you will meet with your provider to discuss your results and treatment plan.

When the patches are removed, we are looking to see if you develop any redness, irritation, swelling, or a rash where the allergen was in contact with your skin. You will likely experience skin itching if you develop a positive test result.

Late positive reactions may occur 7 to 21 days after application of the panels. Follow up with your provider if you experience any of these delayed reactions.

## How to Prepare for your Patch Testing?

### Medication Adjustments

- You may continue taking daily antihistamines throughout patch testing if this is part of your normal routine. However, no new antihistamines may be started without consulting the provider.
- Avoid use of the following topical medications for at least 24 hours prior to patch application: creams/lotions, antihistamines, glucocorticoids, immunosuppressants, and immunomodulators.
- Oral steroids must be discontinued 1 day prior to patch testing.

### Skin Preparation

The patch application site will need to be intact and clear to allow for the most accurate results. If you have a sunburn, rash, or other injury to your back, you may need to reschedule your patch testing.

Avoid ultraviolet (UV) treatments, heavy sun, or tanning bed exposure for 3 weeks prior to your patch testing as these exposures can lead to false negatives.

### Other Things to Avoid:

- Use of alcohol or other irritating substances on the skin prior to testing
- Excessive sweating during the testing period to maintain sufficient adhesion to the skin
- Excessive physical activity to maintain sufficient adhesion and to prevent actual loss of patch test material
- Getting the panels and surrounding area wet

## Patch Testing Risks

With every type of allergy testing, patch testing has a risk of an acute allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis, following the application of the patches. If a severe allergic reaction occurs, remove the patch test, go to the ER if symptoms of anaphylaxis develop, and report the reaction to your office.

The most common adverse reactions include itching, burning, redness, mild swelling, and irritation to the application site.

Most of these mild allergic reactions resolve after the patches are removed.

## Things to Remember

- Review the list of medications that need to be adjusted during patch testing. Adjust as indicated by your provider.
- You may experience itching or discomfort on your skin throughout the patch test if you have an allergy to any of the substances on the patch.
- If you develop any systemic symptoms such as facial swelling or difficulty breathing immediately call your provider.
- Keep the location of the patch dry and clean to prevent the patch from falling off. Avoid excessive sweating during the patch test.

### Clinic Locations and Hours

Visit our website at [www.columbiaallergy.com](http://www.columbiaallergy.com) to find your nearest location for patch testing and our clinic hours.