

Skin Prick Test Information

What is an allergy?

An allergy develops when the body's immune system over-reacts to a substance that is not normally harmful, e.g. grass pollen. In allergic reactions the body produces powerful chemicals such as histamine. These chemicals cause unpleasant symptoms and can be harmful and cause damage to the body.

People can have allergies to almost anything, from animals, bee and wasp stings to grasses or even chocolate. The substances that cause reactions are called allergens.

Skin Prick testing

- A Skin Prick Test is used to diagnose allergies. The nurse will prick gently through a drop of allergen extract placed on the surface of the arm. If you are allergic to the allergen you will have a small, itchy swelling and a reddening of the skin after 10-15 minutes.
- The nurse will ask you to rest your arm near the edge of a table and using a pen they will mark and code your forearm onto tape (see picture below). They will then apply one drop of each allergen solution on to your skin next to the code number. The nurse will prick the skin through the drop using a lancet; this feels like a small pinprick. The nurse will then blot the forearm dry.



Before your skin prick testing

- **You should not take any antihistamines or cough medicines for at least 5 days prior to your skin prick testing appointment;** this is because these medicines interfere with the body's reaction to the skin prick test and could suppress your results. Please speak to a pharmacist if you are unsure of the ingredients in any medications you are currently taking.

After your skin prick testing

- The reactions will disappear after 2 to 3 hours. The nurse may apply cream to stop any itchiness caused by the reactions
- You may resume your medications unless the doctor advises otherwise
- The doctor will discuss the results with you and give you the relevant information regarding any of the substances to which you have reacted
- The symptoms of an allergy can be controlled using medication in the form of tablets, inhalers, creams etc depending on the location, type and seriousness of symptoms. Remember these medications do not cure the allergy and only provide relief while they are taken or applied. Your doctor will prescribe the treatment most suitable for you.