

Why have you been patch tested?

The investigation you have undergone is to establish whether you are allergic to something with which your skin has come into contact. The series of tests is undertaken to prove (or disprove) a suspicion of an allergy that was previously not considered. Unexpected relevant positive patch tests are common and enable your dermatologist to offer advice on avoidance when found.

For what have you been tested?

The test materials selected vary from individual to individual depending upon the case history. More common causes of contact dermatitis due to allergy include some metals (particularly nickel in costume jewellery and clothing); ingredients of cosmetics, including perfumes; components of medications applied to the skin; chemicals in rubber, leather and cement; plastics and glues; adhesive tapes; preservatives and disinfectants; dyes; and some plants. You will, therefore, have been tested to identify whether you are allergic to these, but additionally you may have been tested against other materials relevant to your own situation.

What do negative patch tests mean?

They mean nothing more than that you are unlikely to have a contact allergy to the materials tested.

If my skin develops a rash when it comes into contact with certain soaps, shampoos, detergents, solvents or oils, why is the test negative?

What is being described is not necessarily an allergy, but a damaging or irritant effect on the skin from the causative material. A careful history identifies such causes; patch tests are inappropriate and unreliable for the recognition of irritants.



If my skin stings when cosmetics are applied to it or if the smell of perfumes makes me sneeze, why is the test negative?

Again, patch tests are not appropriate for such reactions. They are only used to identify the cause of a more persistent rash known as dermatitis.

Do patch tests diagnose drug/ingested food allergy?

The answer is generally no, except in exceptional circumstances.

If I am diagnosed as having an endogenous skin condition following my test, what does this mean?

Not all skin disorders are due to contact allergy or other outside factors. The reason for many skin disorders is not understood well enough for a full explanation to be given about the cause. It is, however, possible in many cases to say with confidence that no outside cause is responsible, particularly when this opinion is reinforced by the finding of negative patch tests. If a constitutional diagnosis is made, it may be necessary to use treatment on a regular basis with the aim of control rather than cure.

Why are the patch tests placed on the upper back when the skin problem is elsewhere?

When it comes to contact allergy, the skin behaves in exactly the same way all over the body. The upper back has been shown to be the most convenient site and, normally, a very reliable one for the test.

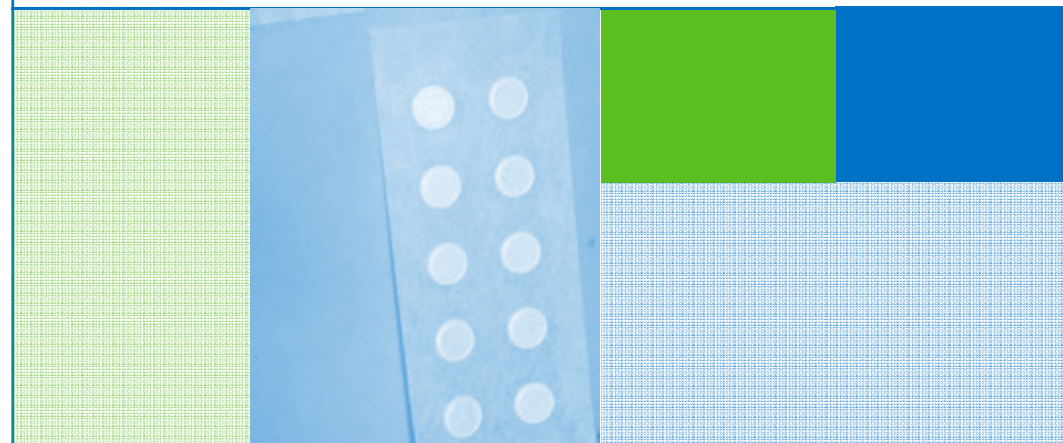
Could my dermatologist have missed a contact allergy?

There is always the possibility that of allergen being undetected. If you realise that you have forgotten to mention a material or substance that you believe triggers your condition, or establishes a link, it is most important to tell your dermatologist who will then be able to run additional tests if required.



Dermatology

Negative Patch Tests



Information for patients with negative patch tests.

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