

Food challenges are safe as long as they are done in the right place, by the right people.

Your child will be invited to come along to Kempton Day Bed Unit where we have special facilities for children, together with specialist allergy nurses and doctors. This will be done on a separate day to your child's clinic appointment.

### Using rescue medicines

Be prepared – carry your rescue medicines (antihistamines and adrenaline pens) with you at all times!

Make sure you refresh your skills with using your adrenaline pen on a regular basis – practice with your **Jext**® trainer at least once every school term.

Make sure your friends and family know what to do if you have an allergic reaction.

### Contact numbers

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Children's Clinic on 0118 322 8142.

### Other useful contacts

Allergy UK  
01322 619898  
[www.allergyuk.org/](http://www.allergyuk.org/)

Institute of Food Research  
[www.ifr.ac.uk/protall/infosheet.htm](http://www.ifr.ac.uk/protall/infosheet.htm)

The Anaphylaxis Campaign  
01252 542029  
[www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)

ALK-Abello  
[www.jext.co.uk](http://www.jext.co.uk)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Based on a leaflet by Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust

Children's Clinic, Jan 2012  
Reviewed: March 2017  
Review due: March 2019



Royal Berkshire  
NHS Foundation Trust

## Allergy tests

Skin prick tests

Blood tests

Food challenges

Information for families

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This leaflet explains about testing for allergies. For specific advice about diet, speak to your GP.

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## What is allergy testing

There are two types of allergy tests – skin prick tests and blood tests. Your consultant or nurse specialist will decide which tests are necessary. The allergens tested are decided according to your child's allergy history.

An allergen is the name given to the substance causing an allergy, for example, a food or pollen.

## Skin prick testing

Skin prick testing is a safe and simple procedure and can help to tell us if your child is at risk of an immediate allergy.

**It is very important to stop all antihistamines before the skin prick test** as they will interfere with the results. You should **stop all medicines containing antihistamine four days before the test** appointment.

If you are worried that your child really needs to take antihistamines before the test, **call us a week before the appointment for advice.**

Skin prick tests are carried out by trained children's nurses who are used to caring for infants and children.

The nurse will mark your child's forearm using a special pen and will then place a small drop of each allergen solution next to it. Then a small pin is used to scratch the skin through each droplet. It feels like being pressed with a ballpoint pen and is not painful, although it may cause some itchiness.

When the test is finished, the solutions are wiped off and you will be asked to wait for 15 minutes until the results can be read.

If the test is positive, then a white itchy spot or wheal (white raised lump) will appear after 15 minutes. The size of the reaction is measured using a special ruler and the results passed to the doctor or nurse specialist for interpretation. However, the size does not relate to the severity of the allergy. The test tells you which allergens may be causing your child's symptoms.

Skin prick testing is a very safe procedure. If a reaction occurs – e.g. itchy skin or swelling – your child will be given oral antihistamines straight away.

The doctor or nurse specialist will give you advice and information about managing the allergy at the end of the appointment.

## Blood testing

Sometimes, it is not possible to do skin prick tests on a child – for example, if they have taken antihistamines before the test or if they have bad eczema. In these cases, a blood test can provide similar information

because it is possible to detect an allergy antibody to a food or pollen in the blood. This antibody is known as Specific IgE.

If you or your child wishes, we can use an anaesthetic cream to numb the skin for a while to help reduce the discomfort of the blood test. Very occasionally, a bruise may appear in the area from where the blood has been taken.

## A food challenge

Sometimes, skin prick tests or Specific IgE blood tests do not give us a clear answer and further tests are needed to establish whether your child is allergic to a particular food. It is in these cases that a food challenge is necessary. They are also useful to see whether a child has grown out of their allergy.

Food challenges are done in hospital and involve giving increasing quantities of the food to the child, while watching closely for any sign of allergic reaction. The challenge starts with tiny amounts and works up slowly as they are tolerated. If a reaction occurs, it is treated immediately to prevent it developing into a severe reaction.

If a reaction does not occur, even when larger amounts of food are given, then the child is not allergic and the food can be reintroduced to your child's diet.