



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Oral Food Challenge (OFC) for children and young people

Kempton Day Bed Unit

You have been asked to come to Kempton Day Bed Unit for you or your child to have an Oral Food Challenge (OFC). This leaflet explains what you need to know and hopefully will answer all your questions. If you do have any other questions please ask the nurse or doctor on the day of the OFC.

Note to young people reading this leaflet: To make this leaflet easier to read we have addressed it to parents or carers; please excuse us for referring to you as 'your child'!

What is an OFC and why is it necessary?

Following your appointment in allergy clinic the doctor or nurse will decide, using information from skin prick or blood testing, whether your child has grown out of their food allergy. The only way to truly know if the allergy is no longer there is to perform an oral food challenge (OFC).

The OFC involves your child eating increasing amounts of the food type being challenged every 10-15 minutes (we call these *doses*). These are measured out and given by the nurse looking after your child and sometimes, we ask the parent to give the child these at regular intervals and record the time and any reactions observed.

Please inform us of any reactions immediately. Please do not give your child any medication on the ward without first discussing with your nurse or doctor.

Are there any risks?

Your child may experience a mild allergic reaction such as an itch or **rash, abdominal pain or vomiting**. There is a slight risk of a more severe reaction or anaphylaxis. This is why we choose to perform OFC in hospital where trained staff will help in the management of any allergic reaction.

Please phone Kempton staff to discuss if your child:

- **Has taken oral steroids** (prednisolone or dexamethasone) during the previous two weeks prior to admission.
- **Has taken antihistamines** in the four days prior to admission.
- **Is unwell** – has fever, chesty cold or needs increased inhalers.
- **Please only eat a small breakfast before attending.**

Do I need to bring anything in?

All the medicines that your child takes, including any that are not taken daily, such as inhalers and rescue medicines (cetirizine and Adrenaline Auto Injectors, AAI). Sometimes, a variety of foods or sauces may be required to encourage your child to eat the foods that they need to. You will need to follow a recipe and bake for both the baked egg and milk challenges, it is important that you follow the recipes we send to you. Please do not make these with other allergens, e.g. flour, if your child is allergic to wheat, but use an alternative. **Please bring in snacks / lunch, especially if your child has other allergies.**

What happens on arrival?

The nurse looking after your child will ask you questions about recent health, rashes, eczema, medicines taken and record these. Pulse, temperature and other observations will also be measured. One of the allergy doctors or nurses will speak to you and examine your child. You should have been sent a copy of this leaflet prior to attendance. It is important that you have read this. You will be given the opportunity to discuss this with the Paediatric Allergy Team prior to commencement so that you understand the risks and benefits involved before giving your consent.

When can we go home?

The whole process takes 4-5 hours. Your child will need to stay for two hours after all the doses have been taken and have eaten a

snack and showed no signs of reactions before going home. Your child will need to stay on the day bed unit throughout the whole process. On discharge you will be given an electronic discharge letter (EDL), a copy will be sent to your GP. The doctor or allergy nurse will also discuss any follow up necessary.

If your child shows that they are no longer allergic:

We will ask you to introduce the food at home over the next few weeks. We will explain to you what and how often your child needs to eat the food. The allergy nurse will phone your child's parent/carer approximately two weeks after discharge. We will send you an appointment for this so you know when to expect our call.

If your child reacts, showing that they are still allergic:

You will need to continue to avoid this food in the diet. You will be given medical advice about how to look after your child following their allergic reaction which may include having no exercise for that day. The doctor or nurse will discuss future allergy appointments with you. On some occasions, it is necessary to prescribe your child medications to take home, you will be given appropriate training on how to give/administer this.

Contact us

Paediatric Allergy Team 0118 322 7224, or email rbb-tr.cat7@nhs.net

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Paediatric Allergy Team

Reviewed: March 2026. Next review due: March 2028.