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PATCH TEST INSTRUCTIONS

Patch testing is useful for evaluation of allergic contact dermatitis. An allergic reaction occurs when an individual's immune system reacts to a specific substance called an allergen.

Contact allergy may be the primary cause of a person's dermatitis or it may complicate other types of dermatitis, making treatment more difficult. Patch testing is a way of identifying whether a substance that comes into contact with the skin is causing inflammation of the skin (contact dermatitis). Once an allergen has been identified through patch testing, avoiding the offending substance will usually result in clearance of your rash. Patch tests are NOT the same as skin prick or scratch tests, which are used to diagnose hay fever or food allergies. Skin prick tests have limited value for evaluating most skin rashes.

The patch testing process involves the application of small amounts of commonly reacting materials to your back under adhesive tape that are left in place for 48 hours. Individual substances are demarcated from each other with a marking pen so that we can tell which substance has caused a reaction. It is necessary to see you three times during the testing process. **You must not miss an appointment.**

It is imperative that these areas be kept dry. No showering, no water on the back, no activities that may cause you to perspire is allowed during the entire testing period. You may wash your hair in the sink and sponge bathe the rest of the skin during the testing phase.

_____ **PATCHES APPLIED**
Keep patch test areas dry. Avoid any activity that causes you to perspire or that would cause the panels to loosen.

_____ **48 HOURS AFTER THE TEST**
You should remove the patches. Keep the patch test area dry until checked by your physician.

_____ **1st READING (2 DAYS AFTER TEST)**
You need to be seen by the doctor for the first reading. Keep test area dry.

_____ **2nd READING (4-5 DAYS AFTER TEST)**
You need to be seen by the doctor for your second reading. Keep test area dry until **after** this appointment.

A positive reaction shows redness, bumps and possibly blisters at the patch test site. **Very rarely prolonged reactions or even scarring may develop at test sites that show very extreme reactions. Other uncommon reactions to the patch test site include a flare of your existing dermatitis, and very rarely, a widespread rash.**

If the patch tests are negative, it is possible that we did not test for the specific material that is causing your rash. However, because we screen for the most commonly reacting materials, when the tests are negative, the dermatitis is most likely not allergic in nature. Further evaluation is possible if the history suggests other possible exposures.

A positive patch test reaction will hopefully be relevant for a person's dermatitis. If so, then avoiding the substance will allow for clearing of the rash. However, a positive patch test reaction may NOT be relevant. In this case, one is allergic to the substance but it is not causing the current dermatitis.

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

Patch testing can only be performed on **NORMAL**, **UNIVOLVED SKIN**. There can be no active skin rash on your upper back where the patch test will be placed.

It is important that you are not taking any **CORTISONE MEDICATION BY MOUTH** (such as prednisone) within seven days of your patch test. You should have NOT received a **CORTISONE INJECTION** within one month of your visit. In addition, it is important that you are not applying any **CORTISONE-CONTAINING CREAMS TO YOUR BACK** within a week preceding your patch tests. **DO NOT** take antihistamines or use topical corticosteroids during this time as they will inhibit reaction in the skin and skew the test results.

You should **AVOID SUN EXPOSURE** to your back for 2 weeks preceding your patch test.

YOU MUST NOT BE PREGNANT AND IDEALLY NOT BE NURSING.

You should **NOT APPLY LOTIONS OR POWDERS** prior to the application of your patch tests.

Please call the office if you have questions (630) 739-DERM(3376) and ask for the medical assistant's desk.