

The skin prick test

Information for patients



ENT Outpatients

Why do I need a skin prick test?

A skin prick test is one of the tests that an ENT consultant can request to help him/her diagnose and treat the symptoms you are suffering from.

People come to the clinic with a range of symptoms. These can include a runny nose, itchy eyes and sneezing. These symptoms are commonly associated with allergic rhinitis.

Allergic rhinitis is caused by an air-borne allergen that irritates the lining of the nose. This results in sneezing and the excess production of mucous that either runs out of the nose or down the back of the throat. To find out if an allergen is causing your problems you need to have a skin prick test.

What allergens do you test for?

Air-borne allergens are transported through the air into the nose where they trigger an allergic reaction. We test for an allergic reaction to the most common allergy triggers. They include pollens, mould spores, fur and feathers from pets, and house dust mite.

How long will the test take?

The test takes approximately 10 minutes to perform and the results will be visible 15 minutes later.

Are there any risks?

If you suffer from asthma there is a slight risk that you could become wheezy or suffer an asthma attack in the 24 hours after the test. We advise you to bring your inhalers to the clinic and keep them near you in the 24 hours following the test.

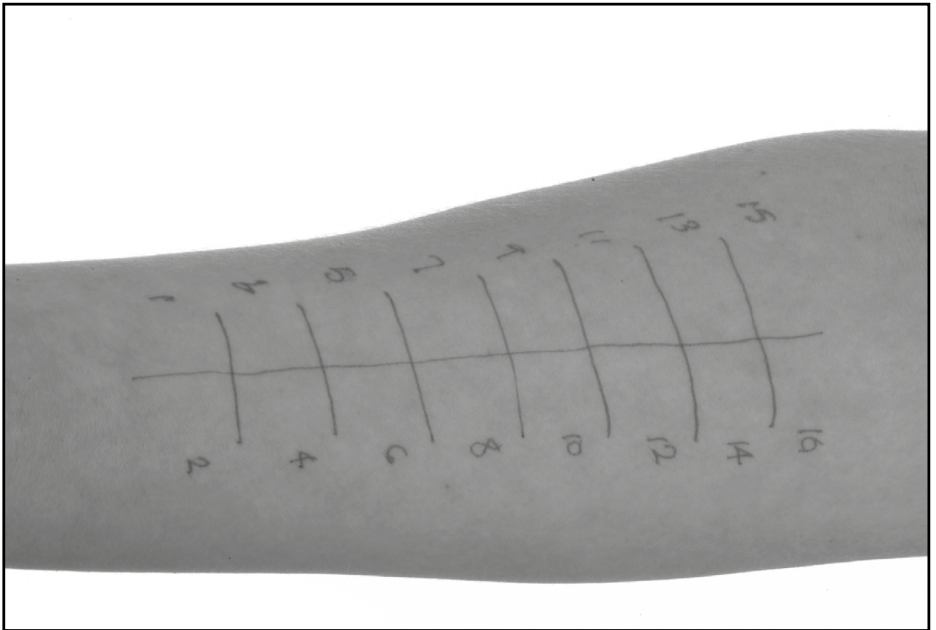
Is there anything I need to do?

If you are taking anti-histamine tablets you need to stop taking them 2 weeks before the test. Histamine is released by the body during an allergic reaction and anti-histamine tablets block its release. This would affect the results of the test.

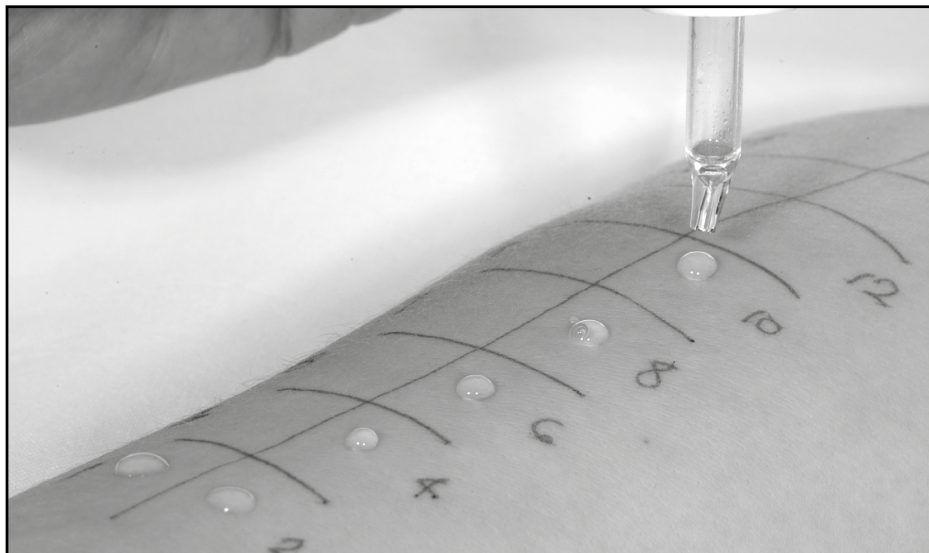
How is a skin prick test done?

The skin prick test is done on the forearm. After signing the consent form your forearm will be cleaned with an alcohol wipe.

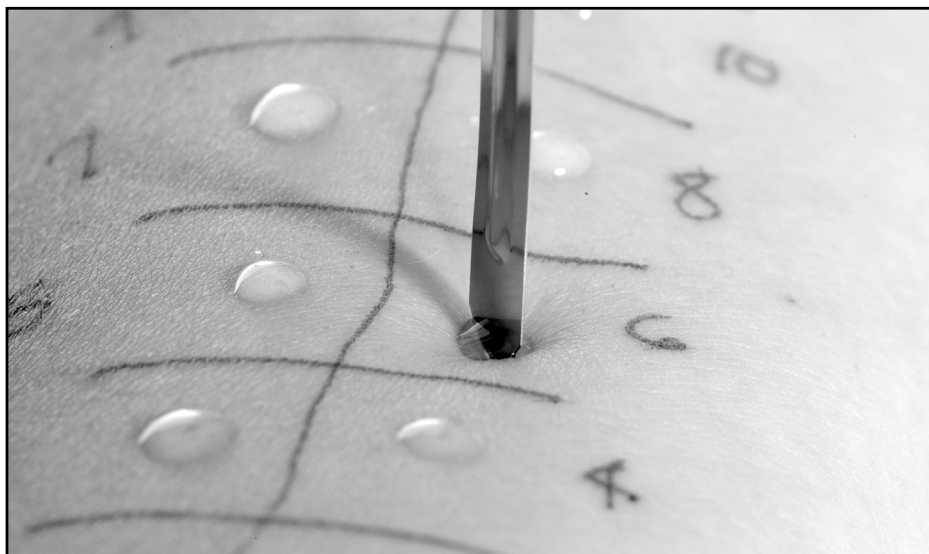
A numbered grid is drawn on your arm using a water soluble skin marker pen.



Each bottle of allergen is numbered and a drop of each solution is placed in the corresponding box in the grid.

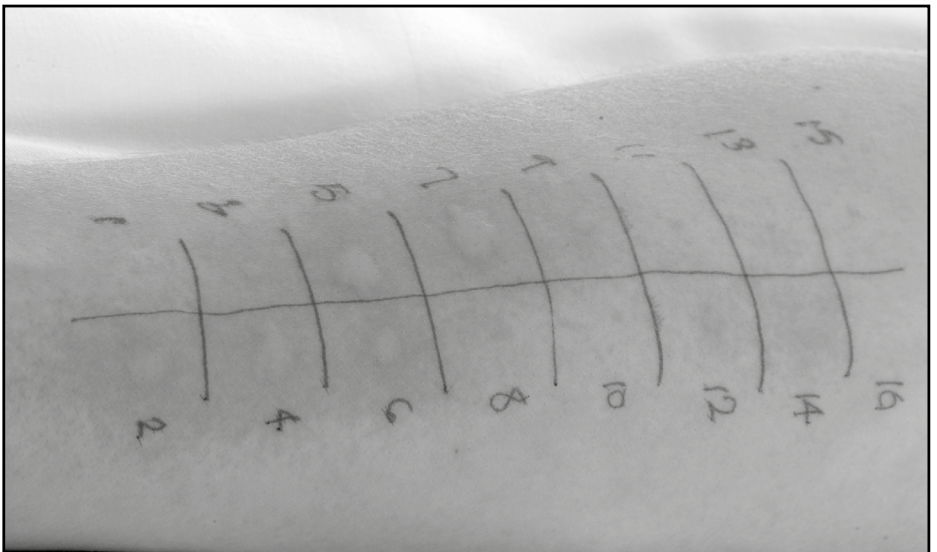


A sterile lancet is used to prick through the allergen using light pressure. This allows the allergen to penetrate the outer layer of skin and facilitates an allergic response.



When each allergen has been pricked, the droplets are removed using a tissue. You will then be asked to sit in the waiting room to await the results. After 15 minutes you will be called back through for the nurse to examine the results.

When the allergen is introduced into the skin, it may trigger a localised allergic reaction. An allergic reaction causes the body to release histamine, which causes the release of fluid from superficial blood vessels and results in a red, itchy, swollen lump called a 'hive' or 'wheal'.



When will I know the results?

You will be aware of the result of the test straight away. If you are allergic to one of the allergens your body will produce a wheal. If these wheals are really irritating you, we can provide you with some steroid cream, which will help to reduce the redness and itching.

What happens now?

You will either have a follow-up appointment with your Consultant or your GP to discuss your treatment options.

Further information:

www.allergyuk.org

Helpline 01322 619 898

www.healthy-house.co.uk

0845 450 5950 (Local rate call)

www.allergymatters.com

www.net.doctor.co.uk

You may also telephone the **ENT Nurse Practitioner** on:
Oxford **(01865) 231182**

ENT Outpatients Department

LG1, West Wing

John Radcliffe Hospital

Oxford OX4 9DU

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

Authors: ENT Clinical Team

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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