

## **CONTACT DERMATITIS CLINIC** **INFORMATION ON PATCH TESTING**

### **What is Patch Testing?**

Patch testing is a way of finding allergies to chemicals which come into contact with the skin. The chemicals may be found at work or in gloves, shoes, clothing, jewellery, hair dyes, cosmetics, perfumes, topical lotions or medicaments and numerous other sources such as skin treatment creams.

### **Will Patch Testing detect all allergies?**

No. Patch testing only detects one type of allergy. This is where a substance in contact with the skin causes an allergic skin rash. Food allergy or allergy causing sneezing, sinus congestion, asthma or hives (urticaria) is not detected by patch testing.

### **What should I bring to the Patch Test Clinic?**

Bring small quantities of substances which you are in contact with at work which you think may be causing or aggravating your rash. If possible try to find out their trade name, source of supply and chemical composition and bring a material data sheet. Bring anything else which is coming into contact with your skin: cosmetics, lotions and creams, perfumes, topical medicaments and any other articles. All these items are needed on the FIRST appointment. The doctor at the clinic

will decide if you need Patch Testing to these items. If you are unable to bring samples, bring a list of all the materials involved and include all ointments involved in your treatment.

### **How many visits will be needed?**

Three in one week. Patch tests are usually applied on the first visit, the results are read on the second and third visits. Occasionally a fourth visit may be required if extra patches are applied during the third visit. The Patch Testing Clinic is held on Monday afternoon, Wednesday morning and Friday afternoon.

### **How long will each visit take?**

The first visit will be the longest; it usually takes an hour depending on the number of patches applied. The second and third visits last about 20 – 30 minutes.

### **How is Patch Testing performed?**

Suspected chemicals are applied in vertical rows on the back and covered with adhesive tape. The tape remains in place for 48 hours and should be kept dry. Strenuous exertion (e.g. squash) should be avoided.

The tests will be marked with a small amount of black/blue ink which can stain. It is therefore a good idea not to wear a good bra, vest or shirt.

Can I bathe?

The back has to remain dry throughout the duration of the week of testing i.e. no showers or baths.

Patch testing is a continually developing form of investigation. Many new allergic substances are being detected each year. In order to determine the accuracy of these findings and improve diagnosis and treatment for our patients, we may need to test you to substances not specifically related to your skin condition. The medical staff will be pleased to answer any questions you have regarding the above during your hospital visit.

The patch test clinic is held in:-

The Welsh Institute of Dermatology  
Glamorgan House  
University Hospital of Wales  
Heath Park  
CARDIFF CF14 4XW.

Please cancel your appointment in advance if you are unable to attend as there are many other patients who can be booked even at short notice.