



Kara Mudd, PA-C

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PATCH TESTING FOR SKIN DISEASE

SOME SKIN DISEASES ARE CAUSED BY ALLERGIES

There are many types of skin disease known as dermatitis. There are many potential causes for this disease to flare: stress, "nerves", dry skin, genetic factors, and skin allergies. Sometimes we are unable to find the cause of the dermatitis. We can (in many cases) only treat the symptoms to maintain control of the process. The ideal situation, however, is to try to find the cause of the problem. In these cases, if we can remove the cause, the disease may be better controlled.

PATCH TESTING HELPS US DIAGNOSE SKIN ALLERGIES

Often we may suspect that a person's dermatitis is caused by an allergy to something that comes in contact with the skin. A person may come in contact with the substance ("allergen") at work, at home, or just in the course of day-to-day living. The first step in determining the cause of an individual's dermatitis is to try to identify any possible substances that the person is exposed to- and is likely to be allergic to. Then we can perform patch testing to look for a reaction. A person can suddenly develop a reaction to products or items that they have been in contact with for years.

HOW PATCH TESTING IS DONE

Patch testing is a simple and painless, non-invasive procedure. Specific chemicals and other allergens are placed on small aluminum discs, which are attached to special tape. The grouped discs are taped on the back and left in place for two days. The allergens used in patch testing depend on the type and location of the patient's dermatitis and will be determined by your provider. The patches are removed in the office at the next visit. The skin will be examined for any potential evidence of an allergic reaction. When we first remove the tape, we are usually unable to specifically identify the allergen. We will need to have the patient return for one final checkup, and there are no further patches placed on the back.

During the time that the patient wears the patches, the back must be kept dry. This includes avoidance of bathing, perspiration and strenuous exercise. If the patient is in a working environment where perspiration is common, he or she may need to be placed on light duty. We will discuss this with the individual at the time of testing.

LIMITATION OF PATCH TESTING

Like any medical test, patch testing is not 100% accurate. There is a small chance of a false-negative or false-positive reaction. For this reason, it is essential to correlate the patch test results with a thorough history and examination of the skin.

COST OF PATCH TESTING

Certainly in these times it is important to be conscious of the cost of medical care. It is difficult for us to know all commercial insurance plans and how they will pay for patch testing. Unfortunately, we do not have a pre-certification or pre-authorization department.

However, if you think you need a direct estimate, you should reach out to your insurance carrier. Let your insurance representative know that you are being patch tested for contact dermatitis using billing code **95044**. A total of **80 or more units** will be applied. There will be a billable office visit as well, likely; **99213** or **99214**. The cost of the testing varies depending on the number of units placed. The procedure involves time spent with the staff and providers, as well as preparation of tests and interpretation of the results. **Most insurance companies cover this without the need of a precertification.**



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Because of the expense and time required to prepare testing prior to the patient's arrival in the office, it is essential if an appointment must be cancelled that we receive 48 business hours notice of any cancellation. Failure to do this will result in a \$150.00 "No Show" fee. Please call 502-977-5061 to cancel your appointment. Your appointment will not be rescheduled until this fee is paid.

Same day reschedule requests will be placed in the queue to be called in the order in which it was received. If your rescheduled appointment is not kept, your appointment will not be rescheduled.

HOW TO SCHEDULE A PATCH TEST

A member of our staff will contact you to schedule an appointment once your referring provider has sent correspondence to our coordinator. Because of the complexity of the procedure, we need to do our testing on certain days. We apply the patches on Monday and then have the patient return on Wednesday for removal. The patient will need to return on the following Friday for discussion of patch test results. Please plan to be in the office 45-60 minutes on both Monday and Friday appointments. The office visit for Wednesday is typically 15-20 minutes.

*** There are several things that are very important that the patient should remember when scheduling patch testing ***

- 1. Please wait 2 weeks after systemic corticosteroid intake (oral or injection form). If you take these on a regular basis, please notify your referring provider and the patch testing team.**
- 2. The back must be free of any active dermatitis at the time of testing. If you are having a flare on your back the week before scheduled testing, please contact the patch test team.**
- 3. Topical cortisone-type creams or lotions should not be used on the back for one week before testing. They may be used elsewhere on the body, as directed.**
- 4. You should not have any sun exposure to the back for at least two weeks prior to testing. This includes photo therapies such as: Narrowband, Excimer Laser, or other UVA/UVB treatments.**
- 5. We ask that you are not pregnant or nursing during this procedure.**
- 6. We ask that on your Monday appointment that a sports bra or other racerback like bras, be avoided until after Wednesday's appointment.**
- 7. Usually, antihistamines and other allergy medications do not interfere with testing, so these can continue to be taken before and during patch testing.**
- 8. If you take any medications that suppress your immune system, such as Humira, methotrexate, or other biologic medications, please notify your provider and the patch test team.**
- 9. Please wear a shirt that is dark-colored or "old" on Wednesday and Friday. We mark the back with ink that occasionally rubs off on clothing.**
- 10. Please bring any personal care products or topical medications that you are using on a regular basis to your initial visit on Monday.**

Scheduling Dates/Times for Patch Testing:

Placement _____ Removal _____ Reading _____



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Post Patch Test Placement Instructions

- Do not remove the panels, despite severe itching, tingling, warmth or burning.
- Do not manipulate the panels with rubbing against the wall, scratching, or other means of trauma; increasing the risk of migrating the panels.
- Avoid the following activities:
 - excessive sweating and bathing until the patches are removed.
 - heavy physical labor
 - avoid repetitive bending/twisting/squatting/overhead reaching
 - sun exposure
- If severe itching occurs, you can take one 25 mg tablet of Benadryl – also known as diphenhydramine. Please do not operate heavy machinery after taking the above listed agent, OR; You may also take the Hydroxyzine 10mg tablets, as directed, that was sent to your pharmacy on file. **DO NOT TAKE BOTH.** Please do not drink alcohol while taking the above listed agents. This medication can induce drowsiness.
- Some of the allergens applied may have color to them. If you see color in the patch testing area, please, do not remove the panels. This is the color of the allergen and does not indicate bleeding or infection.
- Wear old clothing throughout the week, to avoid bleeding of the skin marking ink onto your clothing/bras.

CONTACT US:

For SEVERE Reactions:

- If you experience difficulty breathing, difficulty swallowing, tingling/swelling of the lips, please call 911.

For Non-Emergent issues:

- By phone: 1-502-583-1749 (after hours – you will be connected with the on-call provider).
- You could also send a message to Kara Mudd, PA-C or Dr. Jyoti Burruss, MD through your patient portal (www.assocderm.ema.md) with your username and password.



Jyoti Burruss, MD
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Post Removal Instructions

Your patches are removed and your skin is marked. Here are a few things you need to know:

- You may shower from the front, wash your hair over a sink or tub, however; please **DO NOT** wash your back or let water run down your back.
- Do not towel dry the back, please allow the area to air dry.
- Please avoid swimming pools, hot tubs, and other bodies of water (other than the shower).
- Please do not scratch your back or put any creams/lotions/emollients on the back, including topical steroids. However, you can use these agents on the body throughout if needed.
- The markings on your skin may bleed on your clothes, please keep this in mind when dressing. Women should consider wearing “old” bras for that week.
- If you experience severe itching, you may apply an “old” towel to the back and apply an ice pack to the region. **DO NOT** put the ice pack directly on the back, which could increase the risk of the removing the markings.
- You can continue all medications as directed, including antihistamines; however systemic and topical corticosteroids are to be avoided during the patch testing week.