

# Respiratory physiology

## Skin prick tests

### Patient information sheet

#### Introduction

The respiratory physiology department performs various tests, which help in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with breathing problems.

#### What is a skin prick test?

The skin prick test is a test to confirm if you are hypersensitive (over sensitive) to external allergens (for example house dust mite or pollens).

It is a quick, simple and safe test providing results on the same day.

#### What does this test involve?

The skin prick test takes approximately 30 minutes to perform. We use extracts of various inhaled allergens such as house dust mite, pollens, cat/dog hair, tree, grass and fungal spores. There is also a negative saline and positive histamine control (for reference).

To perform the test the forearm will be marked with a pen to identify the site for each allergen. A drop of each allergen will then be placed on the forearm approximately three centimeters apart. Using a specially modified lancet we then prick through each drop to the top layers of the skin. This is not painful and it should not bleed.

The skin may become itchy and if you react to any of the allergens it will form a wheal (bump) and flare (redness) at the site. The reaction will be measured after approximately 15 minutes and will go down within an hour.

Although rare after the tests, in some cases it is possible to have a reaction 24 hours after the test. In this situation, or if you are concerned about any symptoms, we advise you to contact your local GP or the accident and emergency department and explain what tests you have had.

#### Preparing for the visit

In preparation for the skin prick test you will need to stop taking antihistamines for 48 hours prior to the test.

You should continue taking steroid medication (i.e. Prednisolone) but please inform the physiologist performing your test if you use topical steroid treatment (i.e. steroid cream).

If you are having lung function tests performed at the same time as your skin prick test you will need to read the information leaflet on how to prepare for lung function tests as well as this information.

Unless otherwise instructed for your lung function tests you should continue taking all other medication as normal prior to the skin prick test.

If you are unsure of any medication details your GP practice will be able to help you

#### Any questions?

If you have any questions about the test or the department, please do not hesitate to telephone the respiratory physiology department on: **01223 638207**.

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