Dr Glenn Parham | Dermatologist
MBBS, BSc(HIM), BSc(CommSt), MMed(ClinEpi), FACD, ACMS

Integricare Dermatology
MedOne Stirling Specialist Centre
T12 / 732 Karrinyup Road, Balcatta WA 6021
T: 08 6400 5678 | F: 08 6288 6666
MedOne Medical Centre
U5 / 3 Doncaster Road, Mirrabooka WA 6061
E: contact@integricaredermatology.com.au
W: www.integricaredermatology.com.au
HealthLink EDI: medonems

Patch Testing: Information & Advice:

What are patch tests and why do we use them?

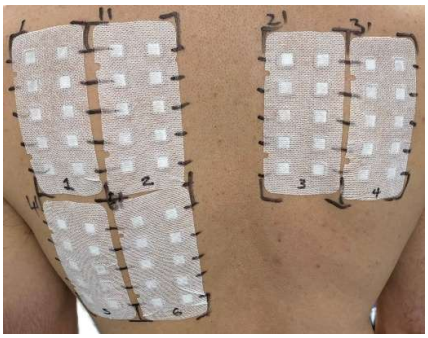
- Patch tests identify substances (allergens) that trigger allergic contact dermatitis: delayed allergic (type 4 hypersensitivity) skin reactions.
- Selected allergens are applied to the skin (usually the back) and left in place for 48 hours.
- Allergic reactions develop slowly and are read at 48 hours and again 1 week after application.
- A positive reaction appears as a red, raised, possibly blistered patch at the site of the allergen, sometimes with intense itch.
- Patch testing identifies allergic, not irritant, causes of dermatitis and is different from skin prick testing (which detects immediate allergies such as hay fever or food allergies).

What is required:

- Custom allergen selection based on your history, examination, occupation and the area of dermatitis.
- Allergens are ordered from the Contact Allergen Bank Australia (CABA), Skin Health Institute, Victoria.
- Bring to your pre-test appointment:
    - If relevant, any work health and safety data sheets, packaging or ingredient lists of suspected products (cosmetics, workplace chemicals, personal care items).
    - Any products you believe may be causing dermatitis so they can be tested utilised for repeated open application testing (ROAT).
- **You cannot wet your back or undergo activities involving heavy sweating for 1 week.**

Process:

- **Preparation:**
    - Best performed when your dermatitis is inactive.
    - Avoid potent topical steroids on the test area for at least 3 days beforehand.
    - Oral prednisolone should be <10 mg / day if used.
    - Immunosuppressive medicines may need review as they can blunt results (cause false negatives).
- **Application:**
    - Allergens are placed on special adhesive tapes with small chambers (Finn chambers) usually on the back.
    - Between 30 and over 100 allergens may be tested at once.
    - The most common set of allergens utilised is the Australian Baseline Series (ABS): the 60 most prevalent, current and locally relevant patch testing allergens, and is continually updated.
    - Clinical photography is undertaken during the process for clinical documentation.



Dr Glenn Parham | Dermatologist
MBBS, BSc(HIM), BSc(CommSt), MMed(ClinEpi), FACD, ACMS

Integricare Dermatology
MedOne Stirling Specialist Centre
T12 / 732 Karrinyup Road, Balcatta WA 6021
T: 08 6400 5678 | F: 08 6288 6666
MedOne Medical Centre
U5 / 3 Doncaster Road, Mirrabooka WA 6061
E: contact@integricaredermatology.com.au
W: www.integricaredermatology.com.au
HealthLink EDI: medonems

- **Process and Readings:**
    1. Day 0: Patches applied.
    2. Day 2 (48 hours): Panels removed and the site examined; new photographs taken.
    3. Day 7: Final reading, 5 days after removal of the patches.
- **Grading of reactions:**
    - Negative (-): No change.
    - Irritant (IR): Non-allergic redness or dryness.
    - +/- Doubtful: Slight redness only.
    - + Weak positive: Red, possibly slight infiltration.
    - ++ Moderate: Red, raised, papules / vesicles.
    - +++ Strong: Intense redness, swelling, or blistering.
- **Relevance of positive reactions:**
    - Current relevance: Explains the present dermatitis.
    - Past relevance: Caused dermatitis in the past but not the current episode.
    - Future relevance: Allergen likely to be encountered again and should be avoided.
    - Uncertain relevance: Importance not yet clear; may be clarified by reviewing personal and occupational exposures.
    - Potential cross-reaction: Allergen may cause reactions to chemically related substances.
    - Printed information is provided on positive reactions and you will need to check all items at home including skin care products, sprays, perfumes, chemicals and workplace chemicals for potential exposures.

Tips:

- Keep the area dry: No swimming, spas, saunas, or showering the test area until all readings are complete.
    - Have showers where the water hits the belly button (navel) down and wash up avoiding wetting the back or have baths.
- Avoid strenuous activity or heavy sweating to prevent the patches from lifting or mixing into each other.
- Do not scrub off the skin markings used to identify each allergen site.
- Wear loose clothing to reduce friction and heat.
- Mild itching is common; contact the rooms if you experience severe pain or blistering.
- Antihistamines can be taken as normal, they do not affect patch test results.
- After testing, record the names of any positive allergens and check product labels carefully to avoid future exposure.