

# TESTfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®

## MetALLS Patch Skin Testing

### What is MetALLs patch skin testing?

Your doctor has suggested you have this test as part of the evaluation at National Jewish Health. Patch skin testing is a method of placing small amounts of different substances on the skin for 2 days, and examining the skin for a reaction for several days after. A positive reaction is red, raised, and often itchy. This method helps to diagnose a metal or cement allergy, and will help your doctor identify the best treatment for you.

### How do you get ready for the test?

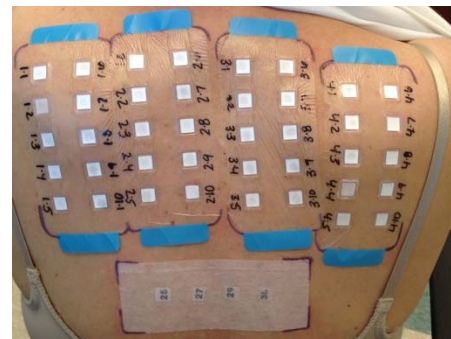
Please follow these directions when getting ready for this test.

- Your skin should be clear for 2 weeks before the test **if possible**.
- Avoid exposing your back to the sun for **1 week** before the testing.
- Stop applying topical steroids to your back or arms for **one month** before your appointment.
- If your doctor agrees, stop taking oral steroids for **one week** before the test. Call us if you have questions about the dose, or can't stop all oral steroids.
- Do **not** apply any ointments, creams or lotions to your back or arms for **24 hours** before the appointment.
- Shower before your first visit, as you won't be able to take one for the next 2 days while the patches are on your back.
- **Continue to take all your other medications as you do.**

### What is done during the test?

On your first visit, we will place several panels of patch tests on your skin, usually the back.

These are four or more rectangular panels with small amounts of pre-applied allergens. Adhesive around the patches will adhere the panels to the skin.



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After two days the panels are removed and the skin reactions are measured.

You will come back again one or two days later, after the panels are removed, to evaluate the skin reactions again. 30% of positive reactions aren't visible when the patches are first removed.

The entire series of tests will take about a week to complete. You will typically have an answer on the last day of testing, although the blood tests for nickel and cobalt allergy take about 2 weeks for the results.



### What should you do once the patch tests are in place?

Please follow these directions while the patch test panels are in place:

- Keep the panels and the skin around the panels dry during the two days the panels are on your back.
- You can take a shallow bath or sponge bath, but avoid getting your back wet. However, you **can** take a shower or bath after the panels are removed.
- Avoid physical activities that may cause sweating or excessive movement during the two days the patches remain applied.
- If you have too much itching or burning under a particular patch, you may cut it out from the rest of the panel, take a photo of the area, and call to let us know, (303-398-1355, Option 4.) Email the photo to [deohs@njhealth.org](mailto:deohs@njhealth.org), or bring it in for your next visit.

### How long will the test take?

You will visit us three to four times during the patch testing. The initial visit will take from 1 to 1.5 hours, and each subsequent visit will take from 15 – 30 minutes.

### How do you get to your test?

On the day of your scheduled test, report to the Check-In Desk in the Adult Clinic.

If you have questions please call our program representative at 303-398-1679.