



Food Challenge Testing - Patient Information Sheet

What to expect during a food challenge

Why do I need a food challenge?

You have been invited to attend for a supervised graded oral challenge to a food. This test is usually carried out to exclude food allergy. Skin prick tests and blood tests are helpful but a food challenge is the gold standard in confirming or excluding food allergy. Your case will have been discussed amongst the allergy team who will have recommended that you are invited to attend for this test.

What will happen when I attend for the food challenge?

Challenge tests are done at the allergy clinic (Hawthorne House at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital). You have been given a date and time to attend for your food challenge. Before going to the hospital, only eat a light breakfast as the challenge should be carried out on an almost empty stomach.

When you arrive at the hospital for your food challenge, you will be taken to a clinic room where you will meet the member of the allergy team who will be performing the challenge. This could be a doctor, nurse or dietitian.

Before the food challenge is started, the procedure will be explained and you will be invited to sign a consent form for the challenge.

We will make sure that you are feeling well on the day and that you have avoided the necessary medications. A list of these medications and the duration that they need avoiding for, is highlighted on your appointment letter.

Please feel free to ask any questions you have at this stage or at any time throughout the procedure.

What will the food challenge involve?

You will provide us with the challenge food; please bring this packed in an airtight, waterproof container. If you are bringing different foods, please pack each one separately. The food will be weighed into appropriate food doses. The first dose will be very small and it will gradually increase. The aim is for the final dose to be equivalent of a regular portion of the food. For example, if the challenge is for cow's milk, this final dose will be an average glass of milk (200ml). The food doses will be given at 20-30 minute intervals. Your blood pressure, pulse rate, oxygen levels and peak flow will be checked and recorded before the challenge starts and at intervals throughout the challenge.

Be prepared to stay in the clinic for up to 4 hours, as the challenge can be a long process. You may want to bring reading material and a drink of water with you.

Information for Patients

If you feel unwell / have a reaction during the challenge, the challenge will be stopped. Appropriate treatment will be given. This is called a POSITIVE CHALLENGE. If you reach the maximum amount of food and have no symptoms or change in your measurements this is called a NEGATIVE CHALLENGE.

After the final dose, you will be asked to stay in clinic for at least 1 hour. At the end of this hour, your blood pressure, pulse rate, oxygen levels and peak flow will be checked and recorded and we will make sure you are well before you are discharged.

Am I likely to have an allergic reaction?

Usually we carry out a food challenge because we don't think you are allergic to that particular food. If you were to experience an allergic reaction however, there is a consultant available and all staff are trained to deal with allergic reactions.

What happens if I am unwell on the day?

If you are unwell on the day of your challenge please telephone us to change your appointment; we will normally not proceed with the test if you are unwell. If you have asthma, it is very important that your asthma is stable and well controlled before you undergo a challenge test. Please contact us for advice if you are at all unsure about this.

If I have any other questions or concerns before the procedure

Please contact the Allergy team on 0121 424 1807 if you have any other questions or concerns.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk.