

Supervised Food Challenge

Why have I been offered a food challenge?

You have been invited to attend the Allergy service for a supervised oral food challenge.

This test is 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 to offer you supervised food challenge.

What is a food challenge?

A food challenge involves eating either gradually increasing amounts or, in some cases, a single portion of the suspected food under close medical supervision. The aim of the food challenge is mainly to exclude allergy and confirm that you can safely eat the food.

Before your appointment

Please eat only a light meal before attending.

Stop any medications listed in your appointment letter for the recommended period before your visit. If you have asthma, ensure it is well controlled.

Please have a look at the checklist below (**Appendix-I**) at least a week before your appointment.

If requested, bring the challenge food with you, stored in a clean, airtight container. If more than one food is required, please pack each food separately.

Please allow up to 4 hours for your appointment.

What happens during the food challenge?

Challenge tests are done at the allergy clinic (Hawthorne House at Birmingham Heartlands Hospital). You will be given a date and time to attend for your food challenge.

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:

- we will make sure that you are feeling well on the day and that you have avoided the necessary medications.
- explain the procedure
- answer any questions you may have

- ask you to sign a consent form
- check that you are well enough to proceed
- record your observations, including your blood pressure, pulse, oxygen levels and, where appropriate, peak flow.

Usually, we start with a very small amount of food. The amount will gradually increase every 20–30 minutes until you have eaten a normal portion or the challenge is stopped. In some cases, where the likelihood of allergy is very low, you may be given a single portion of the food instead.

Your observations will be monitored throughout the challenge.

What happens if I have a reaction?

If you develop symptoms of an allergic reaction, the challenge will be stopped immediately. The Allergy team will assess you and provide any treatment that is required.

This is called a positive food challenge.

If you complete the challenge without developing symptoms, this is called a negative food challenge.

After the challenge

After your final dose, you will remain in the clinic for at least one hour for observation.

Before you leave, we will ensure you are well and discuss the results of your challenge.

Am I likely to have an allergic reaction?

Food challenges are only recommended when the Allergy team believes the risk of a significant allergic reaction is low and the benefits of testing outweigh the risks.

Although reactions can occur, the challenge is carried out in a specialist Allergy clinic where staff are trained to recognise and treat allergic reactions, including anaphylaxis.

What happens after a successful challenge?

If your food challenge is negative, allergy has been excluded and you do not need to avoid the food.

If your food challenge is positive, we will explain which foods you need to avoid and provide advice on ongoing management, including any follow-up appointments, medication or emergency treatment that may be required.

Contact Us

If you have any other questions or concerns:

- Telephone: 0121 424 1807 or 0121 424 2169 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)
- Email: I&AMedicalSecretaries@uhb.nhs.uk

Useful Links:

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/food-allergy/.
- www.allergyuk.org. – Helpline and information service to support people with allergies
- www.anaphylaxis.org.uk. – Training, support and advice to help people live with allergy
- www.bsaci.org.uk. – The British Society for Allergy and Clinical Immunology. Helpful for both patients and health care professionals alike
- www.bda.uk.com. (British Dietetic Association (BDA))

Appendix-I.

Supervised Food Challenge – Pre-Appointment Checklist (Complete 5 days before your appointment)

Question	✓ Yes / X No
1. Do you currently have an illness such as a cold, sore throat, infection or a new rash?	☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Are you experiencing severe flare-up of an allergic condition (for example, asthma, eczema or hay fever)?	☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Are you unable to stop taking antihistamines (allergy tablets) for 5 full days before your appointment, or are you unsure whether any of your regular medications need to be stopped?	☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Is your asthma currently poorly controlled?	☐ Yes ☐ No

If you answer “Yes” to any of the questions above, please contact the Allergy service as soon as possible before your appointment.

Accessibility

To view this information in a different language or use text-to-speech reader visit www.uhb.nhs.uk, click the yellow and black circular icon in the bottom right of the web page to open the ReachDeck toolbar and then use the search bar to search by the name of the leaflet. If you require this information in another format such as braille, please email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk.



How did we do? 😊 😐 😞

If you have recently used our services we'd love to hear about your experience. Please scan the QR code or follow the link to share your feedback to help us improve our services. **Thank you.** www.uhb.nhs.uk/fft

