

Oral Food Challenge Tests

What is a food challenge?

Food challenge is the gold standard for the diagnosis of food allergy because blood tests (specific IgE antibody) or skin prick tests may not accurately predict what clinical reaction will occur with food exposure.

Why a food challenge may be needed

Food challenges may be performed for several reasons:

- To clarify which substances are causing an allergic reaction, if any
- To identify foods which may no longer cause a reaction
- To investigate unusual allergy problems

Where and when

Food challenges must be carefully considered and should usually take place in hospital in case of a severe reaction including anaphylaxis which needs treatment.

The challenge will take place on the Children's Day Unit. The test will be overseen by one of the day unit nurses, and medical staff are available close by throughout.

Before a challenge

- Stop antihistamine medicines (like cetirizine, chlorphenamine, loratadine etc) at least 3 days before the challenge.
- If you have needed to give the antihistamine, we will be happy to reschedule the challenge for a different day.

On the day of the challenge

- Your child should be in good health on the day of the challenge.
- Your written consent, as a parent, will be required before the test starts.

During the test your child will be exposed to an increasing amount of the food at regular intervals, aiming for a target amount. At each stage we have to wait 15-20 minutes to make sure there is no reaction, which means the test may take up to 5 hours (including 2 hours after the last stage of the challenge). The test will stop if there is a significant reaction at any stage.

We would not be doing the test if we thought there was a high risk of a severe anaphylactic reaction but parents should understand that anaphylaxis is a potential risk and would require urgent treatment.

If there is a reaction which needs treatment your child may need to stay in hospital overnight.

We hope you find this information sheet useful but we cannot cover every eventuality, so if you have any questions please ask on the day of the challenge.

Developed by the Northern Paediatric Allergy Group

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Freephone: **0800 032 0202** Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111** www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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