

Food Challenges

Paediatrics



Why does my child need to have a food challenge?

A food challenge is a procedure carried out in hospital to see if your child is able to eat a certain food. Your child may also be having a food challenge if other allergy testing is inconclusive, the challenge will be done in order to find out if your child has an allergy or not.

Benefits

- Safely find out if your child is able to eat the food.
- Eat a food that your child is avoiding at present.
- Make your family life easier
- Reduce the worry of having an allergic reaction.
- Recognise the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction and how to treat it.

Risks

- Your child may have an allergic reaction during the procedure; this is why the test is carried out in hospital. Common symptoms include itchiness, hives, tummy ache, uncommon reactions include swelling, diarrhea, vomiting, wheezing, coughing and rare symptoms can include anaphylaxis.
- However given the slow increase in dose and early recognition and treatment of any developing reactions, the risk of severe reactions is minimised.

Before you arrive

- **5 Days before make sure your child is not taking any antihistamines**

It is also important that the child is well and is not suffering from any significant illness on the day of the challenge. In the weeks leading up to your child's challenge, make sure you check for signs of illness, such as:

- Rash
- Runny nose, sneezing or a cough
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Children with ongoing eczema or nasal snuffliness who are not having an exacerbation of their condition may still undergo the challenge.
- Children with resolving cold illnesses may still undergo the challenge as long as they are not taking antibiotics and they are not requiring ongoing treatment with analgesics such as Paracetamol or Nurofen.

In the week before the challenge, it is important to avoid taking of antihistamines. These may suppress allergic reactions to the challenge, leading us to the wrong conclusion that the child can tolerate a particular food. At times antihistamines can suppress the early milder reactions to the food during a challenge and thus misleading us to continue with higher doses which will increase the risk of severe reactions.

If you have any concerns about your child's health before you come for the challenge, please call 01932 72 2780 and speak to one of the allergy nurses.

Please make allowances for parking and arrive early on the day of the challenge.

No siblings or other children are allowed.

Medicine

If your child is taking medicines known as antihistamines such as chlorphenamine (Piriton), cetirizine (Zirtek or Piriteze), loratadine (Clarityn) or fexofadine (Telfast), he/she needs to stop taking them before their food challenge.

- Chlorphenamine (Piriton) - stop 3 days before test.
- Cetirizine (Zirtek or Piriteze) - stop 5 days before test.
- Loratadine (Clarityn) or fexofadine (Telfast) - stop 7 days before test.
- Please note that some medications have antihistamines such as drowsy cough medicines, always check the labels.
- Some nose sprays and eye drops also contain medications that can affect the skin prick test.

If your child has an allergic reaction before/whilst waiting for their food challenge, treat them as you usually would. Administer antihistamines as required. Inhalers should not be stopped.

All food challenges take place on Oak Ward (Children's Day Unit), situated in the Duchess of Kent Wing at St Peter's Hospital. Level 3

Please bring all your child's medications, spacer and adrenaline pens and the food to be tested to the challenge.

Asthma

It is important that your child's asthma is under control in order for them to do the challenge, if you think your child's asthma is worse in the week leading up to the challenge, please call the allergy nurses on 01932 72 2780.

Arrival on the ward

Your child will be allocated a bed space where they will sit for the day.

You can bring your own toys, books, iPads, computers, phones, or anything else from home to entertain your child, we also have play specialist available on the day.

Your child will be assessed by the nurses and doctors, the challenge will be explained. We will be able to talk to you and your child and answer any questions and go through any concerns you have. You will be asked to sign a written consent before we start the food challenge.

Checking your child's health

Before starting the challenge and giving your child any foods, a nurse will do some observations. They will listen to your child's breathing, place a probe on your child's finger to record their heart rate, and how much oxygen is in their blood and record their height and weight. These observations won't hurt your child but will need to keep still while we do this to get a clear measurement.

A doctor will also take a more detailed history from you regarding your child's allergies and general health.

What will happen during a food challenge?

If it has been more than 6 months since your child's last skin prick test, this may need to be repeated for the food challenge food on the morning of the challenge.

During the food challenge your child will be asked to eat between five to seven doses of the food we are testing for and in total the entire challenge will last approximately 6 hours

The procedure may start by a lip challenge when a tiny amount of the food that you have brought with you is applied onto the lips, and then wiped off. Your child then will be monitored for the following 15-20 minutes and only in the absence of any signs of a reaction that the first dose of intake will be given. This stage of challenge may not be necessary for every child, and we may proceed directly to ingestion of the food and first dose of the

challenge. Your child may have their observations checked again.

This will be followed by intake of increasing amounts with gradual increments over a number of doses until the child's intake reaches a level that is thought to represent a normal amount of intake for this particular food for your child. There will be intervals of around 15-20 minutes following each increment during which the child will be monitored and examined to look out for any signs of a developing reaction.



It will also be appropriate to take into account any complaints the child makes, if the child does complain of any abnormal feeling, just ask the nurse to come and see you earlier as any complaints could mean an allergic reaction and should be immediately communicated to the nurse or doctor on the ward.

They will make the appropriate evaluation and decide whether there are enough changes to allow a secure diagnosis that the child has reacted.

If your child has eaten their entire first dose of food and not had an allergic reaction, they'll be able to have their next dose.

Once your child has eaten all of their doses of food, we will keep them in the children's day unit for another two hours, to check for any signs of an allergic reaction.

Positive challenge (has an allergic response)

Your child may have an allergic reaction during their test, if your child does have an allergic reaction, they will not have to eat anymore of the food and they will be given medicine to stop it.

The period for observation may need to be longer, until they are well enough to go home, but not usually overnight.

Negative challenge (does not have an allergic response)

If your child tolerated all the amounts given without developing any convincing allergic reactions, you will be discharged home with the instructions to continue to keep an eye on the child, inspecting the skin and observing for his breathing and looking out for any change in his bowel habits over the following 48 hours.

If your child remains well, it is important that you start including the particular food in the diet, two to three times per week in order to keep maintenance of the food. If your child does not eat the

food for more than three months, the challenge may need to be repeated as they have the potential to develop an allergy to this food again.

We have a long waiting list for food challenges and therefore it is vital that you commit to feeding the food to your child on a regular basis.

If your child doesn't like the food they are trying

Lots of children don't like to experience new foods, which is perfectly normal. Please feel free to bring some food from home that they do like to help disguise the taste, and to help them eat it. You could also bring some food that your child likes (favourite foods) to eat after they have had their dose.

Food

You must bring your food to the challenge unless otherwise instructed; if you come without any food, we are unable to do the challenge. You should receive information along with your food challenge appointment regarding which food to bring to your child's food challenge.

Sometimes you will be given a recipe to make a cookie or a fairy cake, depending on what food challenge has been booked for your child.

If you do not receive this or do not understand the instructions, please contact the secretary on 01932 72 3293 / 2488 or e-mail asp-tr.paediatricallergysecs.nhs.net

Contact us

If you have any queries regarding the food challenge, please contact the allergy nurses on 01932 72 2780 or Oak ward on 01932 72 2016 or e-mail: asp-tr.paediatricallergysecs.nhs.net

Further Information

We endeavor to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty.

If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net. If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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اگر آپ اس کا اردو زبان میں ترجمہ چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم اس فون نمبر 01932 723553 پر رابطہ کریں

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Jeżeli chcemy, aby te informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić 01932 723553

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