

Testing for a suspected food allergy with an oral food challenge

Department of Adult Allergy

Information for Patients

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What is an oral food challenge?

Oral food challenge (OFC) is a test that helps to diagnose a food allergy.

You will be given a gradual increasing amount of specific food, which you may be allergic to, under close medical supervision. It is given in a safe setting with access to medications and equipment to treat an allergic reaction.

This test is mainly done to confirm or rule out allergy to specific food.

What should I do before an OFC?

When you are sent an appointment for an OFC, please confirm if you can attend. If you do not attend a booked and confirmed appointment, we can not offer a further appointment. This is due to limited capacity, unless there are very good reasons.

You need to update the team if there are any changes in your health condition or medications leading up to the OFC.

If you are unwell in other ways including:

- asthma flare up,
- severe hay fever,
- flare up of skin conditions such as urticaria,
- high temperature,
- cold/flu,
- diarrhoea

around the time of an OFC then your test might have to be changed.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Some regular medications can affect the results of an OFC, so the team will advise you to stop medications like antihistamines. How long you will need to stop the medications will depend on the type of medication. The nurses/doctors will give you this information by phone.

If you have asthma, you should use your regular asthma inhalers.

If you have eczema please use your regular creams or ointments.

How long does a food challenge take?

The length of time varies. It is based on the specific food being tested and the reactions, if any.

Oral food challenges are usually expected to be over within a half day visit to the hospital, but expect to be in the hospital for few hours. Keep yourself free for that day if you can, by making arrangements for anything you may have later in the day.

What to bring for OFC?

Please wear loose fitting clothes as this makes it easier for the doctors and nurses to do checks and testing.

Please bring things (books, portable device etc.) to keep you occupied.

Please bring your regular medications.

If you have asthma please bring your inhalers. If you carry an adrenaline auto injectors please bring them with you.

What happens on the day of OFC?

On the day of OFC, please come to the main reception at Glenfield Hospital and ask for the Allergy Day Case clinic.

When you arrive, the allergy team will check your observations and carry out a physical examination.

The doctor will explain the OFC procedure to you and answer any questions. The doctor will ask your consent to do the test.

Before starting OFC, a fine tube (cannula) will be placed in the vein on your hand or arm. This line will be used in case of emergency treatment, if needed.

The OFC will begin with you being given a small amount of the food, sometimes with rubbing of the food over inside of your lips.

If there is no reaction after 15 to 30 mins a larger dose of the food will be given.

Vital signs and a physical examination will be carried out before you have the next increasing dose.

OFC continues until either there is a reaction or a enough of the specific food has been eaten so that the test result is reliable.

What are the risks of OFC and what happens if there is reaction to OFC?

The main risk of OFC is having an allergic reaction to the food that you are being tested for. Usually the reactions will be mild as the food is given in small increasing doses and stopped right away if you have a reaction.

You will be treated with antihistamines and any other treatment depending on how severe the reaction.

Very rarely there can be severe reactions and the treatment can include adrenaline injections and in very rare cases will need hospital admissions for further monitoring. You do not need to be prepared to stay in the hospital.

What happens at the end of OFC?

The clinician will explain the result of the challenge test and give advice if you can have the specific food or will have to avoid it.

A letter will be sent out later to you and your GP about the results of the OFC test.

Contact details

Asthma and Allergy Nurse: 0116 258 3557 - Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 4.30pm

Secretary for consultants: 0116 258 3118 - Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm

(Messages can be left on our answerphones out of hours or when we are unavailable).

Further information

Useful websites:

- www.allergyuk.org
- www.anaphylaxis.org.uk/

If you have any questions, write them down here to remind you what to ask when you speak to your nurse/ doctor:

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

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