

# Allergy Clinic

This leaflet explains more about how to prepare for and what to expect when you attend for your child's allergy appointment. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

The important things to remember are

- **Antihistamines should be stopped prior to the appointment**
- **Appointments may take two hours.**

## Before the appointment

Your child's journey through clinic may include time with a doctor, a specialist allergy nurse and a dietician. They may undergo skin prick testing and/or blood tests and the appointment may take two hours. Please arrive on time for your appointment.

If your child is taking antihistamines (for example Piriton®, Zirtek® or Clarityn®) these should be stopped before they attend as they will interfere with the tests we perform.

Please do not give your child:

- short acting antihistamines (such as chlorphenamine, also known as Piriton®) for at least **two** days before the appointment
- long acting antihistamines (such as cetirizine and loratidine, also known as Zirtek® and Clarityn®) for at least **five** days before the appointment.

Please be aware that some cough and cold remedies (such as Benylin®) contain antihistamines. If you are unsure whether your child's medicine contains antihistamines, then please check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. Your child does **not** need to stop any other medication (such as asthma inhalers, nasal sprays).

Please bring to your appointment:

- photos of the allergic reactions that they have experienced (if available)
- all of the medicines that your child currently takes, including any inhalers. If your child uses a spacer device, please also bring this with you to the appointment
- previous clinical letters and information from other hospitals
- snacks and activities to keep your child happy and to distract them during skin tests if necessary.

If your child has been referred for investigation of a suspected allergic reaction to a drug, it would be helpful if you could bring along any information from other healthcare

professionals that you may have, such as a clinic letter or notes, which describe the reaction.

Before your appointment, please think about any issues that you would like to discuss and make a list of questions you may have.

## **Arriving at the appointment**

The allergy clinic is based in the Dragon Centre in the Lanesborough Wing at St George's Hospital. Our receptionist will greet you on arrival.

Your child will have their height and weight measured by a member of our nursing team. If your child is under one year old, they shall be weighed with clothes and nappy removed. If they are older than a year they need only remove their shoes and coat. Please bring your child's red book (personal child health record) with you; the weight and height can be recorded in this.

Please arrive 5-10 minutes before your appointment to allow your child to be measured.

## **Food and Drink**

Most of our patients have food allergies. Please make sure no food is dropped or left unattended within the clinic to ensure everyone's safety. Please do not bring hot drinks.

## **What to expect at your appointment**

Your child may see a variety of specialists including doctors, nurses and dieticians. He/she may also undergo allergy testing. There is more information about the different allergy tests below. We may provide advice on:

- managing allergic diseases, such as showing you how to use inhalers and nasal sprays correctly
- managing your child's eczema
- what to do if your child has an allergic reaction, including the correct use of antihistamines and adrenaline auto injectors.

The dietician may be asked to see you to provide advice on food allergen avoidance and suitable food alternatives, ensuring your child meets all the necessary nutritional requirements for a healthy, balanced diet.

St George's is a teaching hospital and therefore there are medical, nursing and other healthcare students observing clinics. If you would prefer a student not to be present in the consultation then please let the receptionist know when you arrive.

## Allergy tests

There are two different allergy tests which may be performed at your child's appointment: skin prick tests (SPT) and specific IgE blood tests. The team will discuss with you which tests are most appropriate for your child.

### Skin Prick Tests

SPTs are performed by our nurse specialists or doctors and require expert interpretation to be useful. The diagnosis of an allergy requires careful consideration of both the patient's symptoms and the test results.

We have SPT extracts for many allergens such as nuts, egg, milk, fish, pollens and animals. Some food allergens are unstable in solution. If you suspect your child may be allergic to fruit, vegetables, coconut or legumes (lentil/chickpea/peas/beans) and wish your child to be tested for these, please bring a small quantity of the particular food with you to the clinic.

The SPTs are labelled by writing in pen beside the drop of skin test solution. A superficial skin prick with a small metal lancet then introduces the SPT solution into the skin surface. It can feel sharp but doesn't "hurt".

After 15-20 minutes a small, itchy bump (wheal) may appear where the SPT was performed and this is measured. The skin can become red and itchy where the SPT was performed. We will ask your child not to scratch this as this can make it difficult to measure the wheal.

Sometimes distracting younger children during the test helps when they are reluctant to proceed. Therefore, you may like to bring a favourite toy or hand held game with you to the appointment to distract your child while they are having SPTs performed.

### Specific IgE blood tests

Sometimes it is not possible to perform SPTs on a child and sometimes a blood test is a more appropriate test. The results of specific IgE blood tests can take up to two weeks to become available and require expert interpretation.

The children's blood test department is also situated in the Dragon Centre and blood tests can be performed on the same day as your appointment on all days apart from Fridays.

### After the appointment

At the end of the consultation a plan for your child's continuing care will be discussed. The plan may include new medications. If your child has a food allergy, a written management plan will be provided and food challenges will be discussed where appropriate.

A letter will be sent to you, your child's GP and any other healthcare professionals involved in your child's care, recording this information.

If your child has had a blood test, we will include the results of this in the clinic letter. If necessary, you may also be contacted by phone to discuss the results.

## Useful sources of information

Further information about allergies and allergy testing can be found at:

Allergy UK [www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)

NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/allergies/>

The anaphylaxis campaign [www.anaphylaxis.org.uk](http://www.anaphylaxis.org.uk)

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's allergy clinic appointment, please contact the children's secretaries via e-mail at [childrens.secretariesC@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:childrens.secretariesC@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

### AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.

