

Supervised Feed

This leaflet explains more about a supervised feed, including the benefits, risks, alternatives and what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for your child.

What is a supervised feed?

A supervised feed is one way to definitively achieve a diagnosis of food allergy or tolerance. Your child will usually have been seen in clinic and will have had skin prick tests and / or blood tests.

Your child's history, along with the test results, may be unclear.

In such circumstances one way of diagnosing or excluding a food allergy is by conducting a supervised feed.

Why should my child have a supervised feed?

A supervised feed can help you find out whether your child is tolerant of the food being tested. If your child tolerates the food it can then be included in their diet. For most foods, we will recommend that the food is included on a regular basis (twice weekly) to ensure tolerance is maintained. This should hopefully improve your quality of life, allowing you to make eating outside the home setting easier, reducing the time spent on checking labels and shopping for food. If a reaction occurs during the supervised feed, you will know that you need to continue to avoid the food.

Are there any alternatives?

The alternative to not undergoing a supervised feed is to continue avoiding the food. When the results of the skin and / or blood tests are higher, children usually undergo a 'food challenge' rather than a 'supervised feed'. A food challenge takes longer since the portion of food is split into smaller doses and given over a longer period.

What are the risks?

Your child may have an allergic reaction during the supervised feed. Reactions may be mild / moderate or severe (anaphylaxis). For this reason the procedure is carried out in a hospital setting.

Allergy specialists will be available to monitor for any signs of an allergic reaction and to give medication to relieve the symptoms if required.

It is important that your child is well and any other existing conditions such as eczema and asthma are under control before undertaking a supervised feed.

How can I prepare for a supervised feed?

Preparing your child for their supervised feed will help them to understand what is happening and can improve your child's willingness to co-operate. It is not uncommon for you and your child to feel anxious about eating a food you have been told to avoid or that has made your child unwell in the past. Talking to your child in advance will give them time to ask any questions or voice any concerns they may have. Use familiar words that your child will understand and give truthful, factual information.

Explain that your child will meet doctors and nurses and that they should only have to stay in hospital for a day. You may wish to bring some familiar toys or books with you to help your child feel at ease when they are with us.

What do I need to bring with me?

You will need to bring with you the food your child will be eating on the day of the supervised feed. This should be in the form that your child is most likely to eat, e.g. for a nut supervised feed bring whole nuts, ground nuts or nut butters.

Your child may not like the new flavour or consistency of the food that they are being asked to eat. It may be useful for you to bring additional foods for mixing or to be eaten alongside, e.g. fruit puree or yoghurts.

As you will be spending a few hours with us, we recommend that you also bring a packed lunch and some snacks for your child.

You must also bring your child's allergy medications and any inhalers and spacers with you.

We will contact you a few days before the appointment to confirm your attendance and advise what you need to bring with you for the appointment. We can also answer any questions you may have. If we have been unable to contact you, please ensure you have spoken to us before attending for the supervised feed. Our number can be found towards the end of this information sheet.

Are there any medicines that need to be stopped for the supervised feed?

Please stop all antihistamines, i.e. Chlorphenamine Maleate (Piriton), Cetirizine (Piriteze, Zirtek), Loratadine (Claritin) and Fexofenadine (Allegra) for at least five days before the supervised feed appointment. Some other medicines also contain antihistamines. If you are unsure whether your medications contain antihistamines please contact us for further advice.

If your child has been prescribed inhalers, you must continue to use the preventer (brown, orange, purple or red) inhalers. However, please contact us if your child needs to use their blue inhaler (Salbutamol) more regularly in the week leading up to the challenge. This is because it is important that your child's asthma is well controlled and stable on the day of the procedure.

What happens on the day of the supervised feed?

When you arrive for the supervised feed, an allergy specialist will explain the procedure in more detail and ask you a few questions. You will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm you understand the procedure and are happy to go ahead with the supervised feed.

The nurse will check your child is well for the supervised feed and measure their temperature, heart rate, oxygen level and blood pressure and listen to their chest under close supervision. Your child will then eat an age appropriate portion of the food over a maximum of 30 minutes and afterwards your child will be observed for one hour to monitor for any signs of an allergic reaction.

If a reaction occurs your child will be treated accordingly and monitored for two to four hours. Rarely in more severe reactions your child may need to stay overnight in hospital.

Where there is no reaction, your supervised feed appointment is likely to last for approximately two and a half hours.

What happens after the supervised feed?

If your child has an allergic reaction (positive supervised feed) this means your child is still allergic to the food and they must continue to avoid eating this food.

If your child does not have an allergic reaction (negative supervised feed) you will be advised to introduce the food into your child's diet after 48 hours (we advise waiting 48 hours to ensure that there are no delayed symptoms such as tummy ache, diarrhoea or eczema flare up) and to eat this at least twice a week. If you do not think that you / your child will be keen to introduce this food into his / her diet regularly, please discuss this with your clinician.

If during the 48 hours after the supervised feed you notice any reactions or have any concerns, please contact us on 020 8725 4219, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) between 8.30am and 4.30pm.

In case of an emergency such as anaphylaxis please call 999 promptly after giving the adrenaline medication if you have it.

Will I have a follow-up appointment?

This will depend on the outcome of the supervised feed. We will arrange any follow up appointments if needed. We will talk with you about any changes in your child's treatment or diet before you go home. We will write to your GP about the result and a copy of this letter will also be sent to you.

Further Information

Anaphylaxis Campaign www.anaphylaxis.org.uk or 01252 542 029
Allergy UK www.allergyuk.org or 01322 619898.

Contact us

If you have any questions or worries about a supervised feed, please call the allergy nurses on 020 8725 4219, Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays) between 8.30am and 4.30pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

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

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

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 our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (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.



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