

Patch Testing



Skin allergies aren't exactly news in our house. I've suffered for years from eczema and urticaria but over the last 12 months things have gotten markedly worse. For some reason all over body rashes, accompanied by swelling have become part of my life. Face, eyes, torso, legs, arms – nowhere is safe. They appear without cause; and take increasingly large levels of prednisone to get under control.

So..after many consultations I convinced my GP to send me to a dermatologist. Now I'd always assumed my skin reactions were food related. God knows why; I just did. Apparently not. I'm told that it's a contact allergy; most likely caused by ingredients in the emollients I was prescribed for my skin. This is why it's important to see a specialist. My old GP never mentioned this as a possibility – I seemed destined to be one of those people with 'bad skin'. I get that most cases of Urticaria clear up in time; and that relatively few become chronic. But do think that a dermatologist is a good place to go; so I would encourage people to push your GP's for a referral rather than suffer under the heading of 'some people have bad skin and allergies'. I wish I'd gone earlier. At the same time it's only fair to say that GP's can be experts in everything, and with only 10 minutes per appointment I find it's best to have a clear idea of what I want.

Within a week of coming off Aveeno my skin was much improved. Still prone to flaring up; but not the chronic discomfort I'd had before. Back to Diprobase and Epaderm for me – they seem the only moisturisers I can use safely. When I saw my GP she commented that she'd never seen my skin look so good. It's been such a relief.

Less of a relief is the patch testing I'm undergoing at St Thomas'. 120 patches have been applied to my back and right arm. I can't tell if I'm itchy and uncomfortable because of allergic reactions, or because my skin hasn't been moisturised since Monday and it's dry under all this tape. Or, maybe it's the tape and marker pen that's doing it.

I don't have too long now; off to the hospital this afternoon for the first 'peek' at the results. The patches will be reapplied and finally taken off on Friday. So that's 5 days of this joy. Apparently they have to stay on for days as the allergic reaction can take several days to develop; and sometimes develop only when more than one contact takes place.

I'm not surprised they don't do patch testing on children. It's bloody uncomfortable. And I can only wash with a flannel – flash back to my childhood sitting in a kitchen sink in a cabin with my mother armed with a dangerous looking flannel.

Fingers crossed I get some answers!

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