Will the Skin Prick Test Hurt?

Skin prick tests may be slightly uncomfortable when the skin is pricked, but should not hurt. Also, if the test is positive, the wheal may feel itchy. This will usually start to settle after 20 minutes.

Are There Any Risks?

Typical reactions include:
- red and itchy skin at the site of the test
- a wheal (a white raised swelling) can develop at the site of the test

Reactions from the allergens after you have left the clinic are rare. In general, any symptoms of an allergy are noticed soon after the skin prick tests. Local itching and swelling normally settles down within a few hours. Very occasionally, patients feel dizzy or light-headed and need to lie down.

Severe allergic reactions from allergy testing are extremely rare. In the unlikely event that you feel unwell after skin prick testing, please contact us immediately. If necessary, we can give you medicine straight away to control these symptoms.

For enquiries and appointments, please contact us at:

**Allergy Centre**
9/F, Li Shu Pui Block,
Hong Kong Sanatorium & Hospital
2 Village Road, Happy Valley, Hong Kong
Tel: 2835 8430
Fax: 2892 7565
Email: allergy@hksh.com

**Service Hours**
Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm
Wed & Sat: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm
(except in the second and fourth week of each month, the Centre will close all day Wednesdays but open all day Saturdays)
Closed on Sundays and Public Holidays
www.hksh.com

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Skin Prick Test
This leaflet explains what a skin prick test is, what it involves and what will happen when you come to our clinic for the test. If you have any questions, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

Why Do I Need a Skin Prick Test?
This test will help us to identify which substances you are allergic to. It can also help us monitor the progress of your allergies. An allergy is where your immune system responds to a substance such as food or pollen as if it is harmful. This can cause symptoms such as:
- a runny nose
- itchy eyes
- hives (rash)
- difficulty in breathing

What Is an Allergen?
The substance that causes the allergic response is called an allergen. A skin prick test (SPT) is an accurate way to test specific substances, to see if they cause an allergic reaction. It can test for food and aeroallergen allergies (those that cause hay fever-type symptoms). SPTs can also be used to help diagnose drug and venom allergies, including allergies to bees and wasps.

Are There Any Alternatives to a Skin Prick Test?
Yes. A blood test can be used to measure your allergic response to a specific allergen. However, a skin prick test is quicker than a blood test. Results are seen in less than 15 minutes, whereas blood test results take about a week.

What Substances Can Be Tested?
The clinic is able to test for a wide range of aeroallergens, for example grass and tree, pollen, house dust mites, and animals. We can also perform skin prick tests for allergens, such as:
- milk
- egg
- soya
- a range of nuts
- a range of seafood
- chicken
- beef

If you think you may have had an allergic reaction to any other food, you can bring a small piece of it with you to the clinic. The food should not be mixed with any other products, for example, sauces. It should also be individually packaged. So, bring a whole piece of fruit rather than a pre-prepared fruit salad. If the food is usually eaten cooked, such as chicken, please bring both raw and cooked samples.

Before You Come to the Clinic
If you are taking antihistamine tablets (such as Piriton, Zirtek or Clarityn), you need to stop taking them before your test, as they may interfere with the test. Please stop taking:
- short-acting antihistamines (such as Piriton) - two days before the appointment
- long-acting antihistamines (such as Zirtek or Clarityn) - three days before the appointment

If you have an allergic reaction before your appointment, treat it as you usually would. Use antihistamines if you need to.

Performing a Skin Prick Test
A nurse will place a drop of the relevant allergen on your skin (usually your forearm or upper back). The skin under the drop of allergen is then pricked with a lancet (a metal stick with a small point on the end that scratches the top layer of the skin). By doing this, the allergen is introduced under the surface of your skin. The nurse will then wipe away the drop. We can test for several allergens at your appointment. The nurse will repeat the same process for each allergen. He/she will make a different mark on your skin with a washable pen for each test. This means we can identify the different allergen tests.

After 15 minutes, the nurse will check your skin for a reaction. There are two types of reaction:
- A positive reaction - The skin under the drop of allergen becomes red and itchy. A white, raised swelling called a wheal is surrounded by a red area. This takes about 15-20 minutes to reach a maximum size and then fades after a few hours. This means you might be allergic to the substance in the solution.
- A negative reaction - The skin under the drop of allergen remains normal. This means that you might not be allergic to the substance in the solution.

Please consult a specialist in allergy for further treatment if the reaction is positive.