

PATIENT INFORMATION

# FOOD CHALLENGE - INFANT AND YOUNG CHILDREN



Food challenges are used to exclude allergy to a food. They can be carried out for several reasons and your child's consultant should have explained the reasons for challenging your child.

Your child will be given the food in a controlled way, with increasing amounts given during each step whilst close observation of your child is carried out. The steps can be adjusted throughout the challenge if any reactions occur, but the aim is that your child will be given an amount of food which will then lead to them eating this on regular basis without the concern of a reaction occurring.

### Benefits of a food challenge

- Safely find out if your child can eat a food that has previously been avoided
- Making family life easier by reducing the time spent checking labels and making eating outside the home easier
- Reduce the worry of having an allergic reaction
- Recognise the signs of an allergic reaction and how to treat it if your child reacts while having the food challenge

### Risks of a food challenge

Your child may have a reaction during the food challenge which is why it is carried out in hospital where reactions can be assessed, reported and treated. Symptoms might include:

<b>Possible Symptoms of a Reaction During a Food Challenge:</b>		
<b>COMMON</b>	<b>UNCOMMON</b>	<b>RARE</b>
Itching	Swelling	Difficulty breathing
Rashes	Diarrhoea	Anaphylaxis
Hives	Vomiting	
Tummy ache	Runny nose or eyes	
	Sneezing	
	Coughing	
	wheezing	

Your child will be closely observed throughout the procedure and any symptoms will be detected quickly and appropriate action will be taken. Depending on the severity of any symptoms experienced the challenge will either continue, be halted temporarily, a stage repeated or aborted. We will discuss these decisions with you throughout the challenge. Medication will be given if necessary.

## **Preparation of your child prior to the challenge**

Unless your child is too young to understand you should tell them:

- why they are coming to hospital
- that they will be given increasingly large amounts of some food and that it is important that they eat this even if they don't like the taste
- explain that the procedure may help your child to get to eat a wider variety of foods
- encourage your child to talk about the procedure and ask questions

## **Things to know before the challenge**

- Your child should not eat for 4 hours before the challenge. The challenge will usually commence approximately 1 hour after you arrive at the Children's Clinic so please ensure a light meal is completed at least 3 hours before you arrive.
- Your child will be able to drink during the challenge so please bring squash with you if they prefer this.
- You will need to bring the food with you for the challenge; please ensure this is in a form that your child will eat. For example, if your child is being given nuts you may wish to bring whole nuts or nut butter. You will be advised which form we would recommend and how much to bring.
- As well as the food for the challenge you may also want to bring a food with you that we can use to disguise the taste of the food being challenged or may make it easier to help your child eat the food. (i.e. bread to eat with peanut butter) Please make sure this is a food that your child has eaten before and is known to eat and tolerate.
- Your child must be well with no cough, cold or recent infections. If they have asthma or eczema this must be well controlled or stable.
- Antihistamines should be stopped for at 72 hours before the challenge as these can give us a false negative result.

## **What will happen on the day of the challenge?**

On arrival your child will be weighed and measured and have some observations done; pulse, respirations, blood pressure and temperature.

A skin prick test will be performed for the food we are going to challenge. Where possible we will also do a "prick-to-prick" test for the food we are about to challenge as well as the solutions that your child may have also been skin prick tested to before.

The team (doctor or nurse) will ask various questions to ensure that you and your child understand the procedure and will answer any questions that you may have.

Once the challenge commences an increasing amount of food will be given at intervals that is decided by the medical staff and your child will be closely monitored in the day case area throughout the entire test.

If no reactions occur and the challenge is completed your child will be observed for a further one hour and will then be discharged. If a reaction has occurred, we will ensure your child is treated and well before discharge.

### **After the challenge**

The nurse will discuss the outcome of the challenge with you and amend your child's Allergy Action Plan accordingly. You will be advised whether the challenge was successful or not and the implications of this.

***Important -if the challenge is successful\_your child will need to be given the food ideally 3 times per week to ensure that their body knows that this food is something that should be eaten. This is particularly important for young children. If this is something that you are going to be reluctant to do, please speak to a member of staff who will explain the importance of this. If you know you are not going to give the food regularly, we may not be able to carry out the challenge.***

### **Follow up after a challenge**

You will be advised on the day of the challenge whether your child needs to be seen in Clinic for a follow up appointment with a Consultant or Nurse. This will depend on several factors including; the result of the challenge and other allergies/conditions that your child has.

### **Contacts**

If you have any concerns or questions after reading this information you can contact:

Allergy Specialist Nurse for Children and Young People – Phoebe Mouldsdales

Mobile number – 07564 848463

Extension number – 30178

Email address – [phoebe.mouldsdales1@nhs.net](mailto:phoebe.mouldsdales1@nhs.net)

Paediatrics Allergy Department

Email: [wah-tr.paediatricsallergy@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.paediatricsallergy@nhs.net)

**If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.**

### **Patient Experience**

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

### **Feedback**

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

### **How to contact PALS:**

**Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: [wah-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:wah-tr.PET@nhs.net)**

### **Opening times:**

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.