

Food Challenges

Information for Parents, Carers and Children



Name: _____

Who to contact and how: _____

Notes: _____

What
is a
food

challenge?

A food challenge is a specific procedure carried out in hospital in order to determine if a child:

Diana, Princess of Wales	Scunthorpe General Hospital	Goole & District Hospital
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including that food in their diet. Over time some children outgrow their allergies, and may be able to tolerate the food that was previously causing them to have an allergic reaction.

The food challenge will check for potentially serious immediate allergic reactions to food – known as anaphylaxis.

Your child will be cared for one-to-one by a paediatric nurse during the challenge; the nurse will monitor your child regularly and be able to treat any reaction that occurs.

Information for patients

What are the benefits of having a food challenge?

A food challenge will confirm whether your child has a food allergy or has outgrown a known allergy. Dependent on the outcome, you may be able to (re)introduce this particular food back into your child's diet. This may help you and your family lead a more normal life, without fear of your child reacting to a certain food

If you find out as a result of the food challenge that your child is allergic to a particular food, you will then be able to exclude that food from your child's diet and pass this information on to your child's school or nursery.

Risks

Undertaking a food challenge does have risk of reaction. The paediatric doctor who has arranged the challenge will have considered this as part of the history of previous allergy and the investigations that have been undertaken, such as blood tests and Skin Prick Test (SPT). The food challenge will only be booked if the risk of allergic reaction is considered low.

If you are concerned about the risk of allergic reaction and anaphylaxis you should speak to the paediatric doctor.

What are the alternatives to my child having a food challenge?

You may choose for your child not to have a food challenge and just continue to avoid the food they might be allergic to. Your child may outgrow the allergy, however, a food challenge is the only safe and definitive way to find out whether your child has a food allergy or not.

Information for patients

What happens when my child arrives on the Children's Ward?

Food Challenges are undertaken on the Disney Ward in Scunthorpe and the Rainforest Ward in Grimsby. You will be sent an appointment letter to confirm the date and the time of the food challenge. Food challenges are always undertaken in the morning we aim to begin the challenge at 09:00hrs. Some food challenges will require you to bring the food to be challenged with you, for instance fish, nuts and processed highly cooked egg.

Antihistamines, such as Chlorphenamine and Cetirizine should be stopped 5 days before the food challenge.

The food Challenge will take 4-5 hours to complete and will include a period of observation after the challenge is completed or to monitor any reaction that has occurred.

Very occasionally it may be necessary for your child to be cannulated before the challenge, this will depend upon past history of severe allergic reaction – the doctor will discuss this with you if it is needed. A cannula is a thin plastic tube that is placed under the skin, usually on the back of the hand. If a cannula is needed your child will have some local anaesthetic cream (Ametop) applied on their hands and / or arms, this needs to remain in place for 40 minutes to numb the area. The cannula will then be inserted and secured.

If your child is unwell on the day of the food challenge it will more than likely be cancelled and rearranged. Similarly if your child has chronic atopic disease such as asthma or eczema they should only be challenged when disease activity is at a stable and low level.

We would be grateful if your child is unwell or you cannot attend the appointment you contact the ward to discuss alternative arrangements.

Please be aware our time, like yours, is precious; we will always endeavor to provide a responsive quality service to you and your child that is safe. This being the case, if you have to cancel an appointment it may be sometime before it can safely be rearranged.

What should I bring?

Please bring a packed lunch of your child's usual foods for after the test. The reason for bringing food from home is to make sure that your child's lunch consists of food that they are known to have had before, and are not allergic to.

It is important your child feels comfortable during the challenge; a teddy or favourite toy may be useful. There may be a Hospital Play Specialist who can provide games and toys; she will be able to offer support and encouragement to your child during their stay. We have a playroom for your child, in order for them to relax.

Please feel free to bring in some food for yourself. There are shops and cafés in the hospital where you can purchase hot and cold food but, as your child will need to stay on the ward when the challenge has started they may not want you to leave. For safety reasons we do not allow hot drinks on the ward. There are facilities on the ward for parents to make themselves a hot drink.

You should bring any medication your child would normally take, such as an EpiPen or inhaler.

Information for patients

Going Home

If your child has not reacted to the food during the challenge, he or she should not eat the food for the first 48 hours at home. You should then slowly reintroduce the food to your child's diet ensuring that it is eaten on a regular basis at least twice weekly.

If your child has reacted to the food during the challenge, he or she should not do strenuous play and activities for the rest of the day as this could bring on a delayed reaction. A delayed reaction can happen up to 48 hours later.

Before you go home you will be given a discharge letter, this should explain the outcome of the challenge; should give advice on what to do if a delayed reaction occurs and confirm what to do next if you need to reintroduce the food to your child's diet. A copy of the discharge letter will be sent to your child's GP.

Reference Section

Food Standards Agency (2016). Allergy basics and stats. Available from www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/facts-stats.pdf. On 25/02/2018.

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust. (2018). Food Challenges. Information for parents and carers. Available from: <http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/leaflets/files/11530Pchallenges.pdf>. On 07/03/2018.

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (2018). Food challenges and supervised feeds. Information for parents and carers. Available from: <https://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/food-challenges-and-supervised-feeds.pdf>. On 07/03/2018.

Contact Details for Further Information

Children's Outpatient Department, DPoW: **03033 303057**

Rainforest ward, DPoW: **03033 304477**

Disney ward, SGH: **03033 302553**

Any Comments, Compliments, Concerns or Complaints

If you have any other concerns please talk to your nurse, therapist or doctor. Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) are available on 03033 306518 (Grimsby, Scunthorpe and Goole). You can also contact nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

As a Trust we value equality of access to our information and services, therefore alternative formats available on request at nlg-tr.interpreters@nhs.net

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