

Welcome to the children's allergy service

**Giving confidence to families with
allergy**

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Our children's allergy service, **based at St Thomas' Hospital**, is a centre of excellence, serving local families in Lambeth and Southwark. We also provide specialist care to children across the country who suffer from allergic disease.

We provide a drug allergy service – a unique service, which investigates suspected allergic reactions to medicines.

We have a large team of medical, nursing and dietetic professionals working within the department. To see who is in our team, visit our website:
www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/allergy

Clinic information

Our children's allergy clinic provides an integrated clinical, specialist and academic service.

It's open 9am-5pm, Monday to Friday.

We're based in the South Wing, which is in the purple zone of St Thomas' Hospital. You can find us on the second floor by staircase and lift B. Please see the back cover of this booklet for a map.

Preparing for your appointment

Before your appointment, please think about any issues for your child that you want to talk about. If you have any specific requirements from your visit, please let us know as soon as possible so we can prioritise these.

Your journey through our department is likely to include time with our doctors, nurses and dietitians, with diagnostic skin tests for most children. Therefore, please allow at least two hours for your child's visit.

If your child is taking antihistamines (for example Piriton[®], Zirtek[®] or Clarityn[®]) these should be stopped before they attend as they will interfere with the test.

Please stop taking:

- short acting antihistamines, such as chlorphenamine (also known as Piriton[®]) two days before the appointment
- long acting antihistamines, such as cetirizine and loratidine (also known as Zirtek[®] and Clarityn[®]) five days before the appointment.

Please be aware that some cough and cold remedies (such as Benylin®) contain antihistamines. If you are unsure whether your child's medicines contain any antihistamines, then please check with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Your child does not need to stop any other medication such as asthma inhalers, nasal sprays or other medicines.

Please bring to your appointment:

- photos of the allergic reactions that they have experienced
- all of the medicines that your child currently takes, including any inhalers – if they use a spacer device, please also bring this with you to the appointment
- previous clinical letters and information from other hospitals, especially where you are concerned your child may have a drug allergy
- snacks and activities to keep your child happy, and to distract them during skin tests if necessary
- list of questions for staff and team members.

If your child has been referred for investigation of a suspected allergic reaction to a drug, it would be helpful if you could bring along any information from other healthcare professionals that you may have, such as a clinic letter or notes, which describe the reaction.

Arriving at your appointment

Our receptionist, will greet you on arrival.

Your child may have their height and weight measured by our nursing team.

If your child is under one year old, they will need to have their clothes removed to be weighed. If they are older than a year they need only remove their shoes. Please bring your child's red book (personal child health record) with you, so the weight can be recorded in this.

If you have a buggy with you, we ask that you leave it in the buggy park area, by the entrance to the department. Please keep any valuables with you.

Please arrive on time for your appointment. If you are more than 30 minutes late you will not be seen as this can delay the clinic and lead to longer waiting times.

While you are waiting

We provide a variety of toys and books for your child to enjoy while they are waiting. You can also bring any toys or electrical devices which your child would like, to occupy them while they wait.

We have wall displays and information leaflets, which you may find interesting to read and gain further information about allergic disease.

WiFi

Free access to the internet is available for all patients, visitors and carers. To connect to our wireless network:

- 1) Go to your WiFi settings and select WiFiSPARK HotSpot.
- 2) Connect.
- 3) Enter your name and email address.
- 4) Read and accept the terms and conditions.
- 5) You will then be connected.

Please note that some internet content may be blocked, and WiFi should not be used for viewing TV programmes or making phonecalls or video calls (including FaceTime and Skype).

Food and drink

You are welcome to bring in snacks for your children to help them stay comfortable during their appointment. Please do not bring hot drinks.

Some of our patients have food allergies. Therefore, please do not let your child eat in the play area by reception and supervise your child at all times. We must make sure no food is dropped or left unattended within the clinic to ensure everyone's safety.

What to expect at your appointment

Your child will see a variety of specialists, including doctors, nurses and dietitians.

Your child may have allergy tests including skin prick testing and lung function testing (spirometry). More information about the different allergy tests is below. We may give you advice on:

- managing allergic diseases, such as showing you how to use inhalers and nasal sprays correctly
- managing your child's eczema
- what to do if your child has an allergic reaction, including the correct use of antihistamines and adrenaline auto injectors.

The dietitian can also advise you on avoiding foods your child is allergic to and suggest suitable alternatives to help make sure your child is having a balanced diet within the limitations of their allergies.

We are a large teaching hospital and have an international reputation for our specialist knowledge in treating children with allergies. We therefore have medical, nursing and other healthcare students observing clinics, owing to the outstanding experience this provides. If you would prefer a student was not in the consultation then please let one of the team know.

Allergy tests

There are a number of allergy tests which may be performed at your child's appointment – skin prick tests, specific IgE blood tests and lung function tests. The team will discuss with you which tests are most appropriate. The following tests may be performed in the outpatient clinic.

Skin prick tests

This is the most common test we do in our clinic. It helps to tell us whether a child is at risk of an allergy to the allergen being tested.



Skin tests are performed by our nurse specialists and they need expert interpretation to be useful. The diagnosis of an allergy requires both a careful consideration of the patient's symptoms as well as the test results.

We have skin prick test extracts for many allergens such as nuts, egg, milk, fish, pollens, animals and some medicines. However, if you suspect fruit and vegetables may cause a problem and wish your child to be tested for these, please bring a small quantity of the particular fruit/vegetable with you to the clinic.

If your child is taking antihistamines these should be stopped before they attend as they will interfere with the test. See page 4 for details.

1. The skin is drawn on so the nurse performing skin prick testing (SPT) knows which allergens are which when they are applied to the skin.



The extract is then dropped onto the skin. A small metal lancet introduces the allergen to the skin. This is not like an injection or a blood test – the skin will not bleed, it doesn't hurt but it can feel sharp.

2. After 10-20 minutes a small, itchy bump (wheal) may appear where the SPT was performed.



This is measured and may help to diagnose an allergy.

3. The skin can become red and itchy where the SPT was performed.



It's important not to scratch as it can make the itching worse and makes it difficult to measure the wheal.

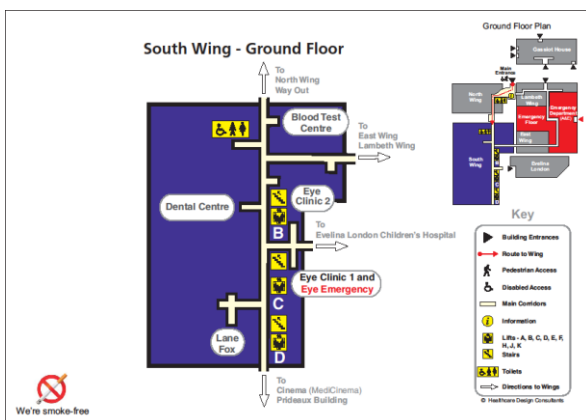
Skin allergy tests can be upsetting for younger children, but distracting your child during the test can be really helpful. Therefore, you may like to bring with you a favourite toy or hand held game with you to the appointment, to help your child while they are having a SPT performed.

Specific IgE blood tests

Blood tests may be used to assess your child's allergies. Sometimes, it is not possible to do skin tests on a child; in these cases, a blood test can provide similar information.

Before the blood test, if your child wishes, we can put on an anaesthetic cream on his or her skin – this will temporarily numb the skin and help to reduce the discomfort of the blood test. It can take up to 30 minutes for the anaesthetic cream to work before blood can be taken.

The blood test department is on the ground floor of South Wing. It is close to Central Hall.



Lung function testing

These tests can help diagnose underlying asthma. It involves blowing as hard as possible into a special tube, attached to a computer. Unfortunately, children under six years of age find this test difficult, and so are not tested for lung function

After your appointment

At the end of the consultation you should have a plan for your child's ongoing care, including results of skin tests and lung function tests.

The plan may include a food challenge, change in treatment, or to continue avoiding a food. This will be recorded in a letter which will be sent to you, your child's GP and any other healthcare professionals involved in your child's care. Please let us know if there is anyone in particular who should know the outcome of the clinic appointment.

You can find out more about food challenges in our leaflet **Food challenges and supervised feeds**.

If your child needs to have a blood test, we will include the results of this in the clinic letter. We will not routinely contact you to tell you the results of a blood test unless the doctor you see agrees this with you.

Help us to improve our service – take part in research

Our outstanding clinical and research services are able to offer your child a range of complex treatments and the chance to take part in a number of research studies. Our aim is to improve your child's and your family's experiences of living with allergies, whilst also understanding how we may better prevent and treat allergic disease in the UK.

It is likely that you will be asked to contribute to questionnaires whilst attending our appointments as part of improving the experience we offer to families.

You may also be offered information about research studies we are carrying out in the department. Involvement in these studies varies from questionnaires, to further blood tests and the option of taking part in randomised treatment trials.

You do not have to take part in any study, but if you find out about one you are interested in, please ask one of the team at your child's appointment for more information.

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet. We very much look forward to meeting you

Contact details

Children's allergy service
Second floor, staircase B, South Wing
St Thomas' Hospital
Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7EH

t: 020 7188 3300

e: paediatricallergy@gstt.nhs.uk

w: www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/allergy

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

Notes

Map and directions

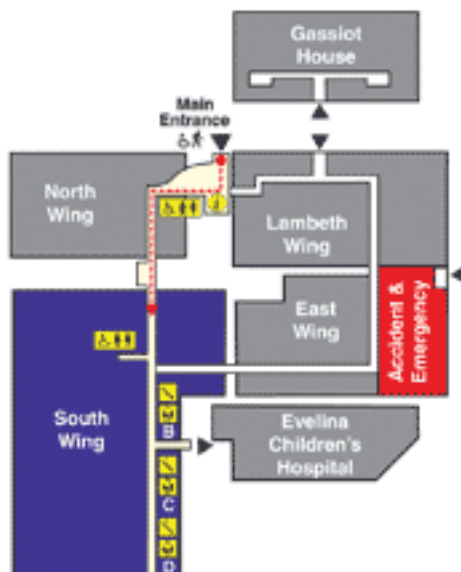
Directions to the children's allergy service:

Enter St Thomas' Hospital at the main entrance and turn right in front of the reception desk.

Enter North Wing (green zone) and follow the signs for South Wing (purple zone) lifts / stairs B, C and D until you arrive at the entrance to South Wing.

Follow the corridor until you reach the entrance to lobby B on your left.

Take lifts or staircase B to the second floor and the entrance to children's allergies is directly off the lift lobby.



Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003 10am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

e: letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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A list of sources is available