

Children's allergy service

Giving confidence to families with allergy

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 have a large team of medical, nursing, dietetic and psychology professionals. To see who is in our team, visit [web www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/allergy](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/allergy)

Clinic information

Our clinic is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

Your appointment will be in the Otter outpatient department. It is in the South Wing, which is in the purple zone of St Thomas' Hospital. You can find us on the 2nd floor, using stairs or lift B. Please see the back cover of this booklet for a map.

Preparing for your child's appointment

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

Your visit will probably include time with our doctors, nurses, dietitians and psychologists. There will also be diagnostic skin tests or blood tests for most children. Please allow at least 2 hours for your child's appointment.

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

Your child must stop taking:

- Short-acting antihistamines, such as chlorphenamine (also known as Piriton) 2 days before the appointment
- Long-acting antihistamines, such as cetirizine (Zirtek[®]), loratadine (Clarityn[®]) and fexofenadine (Telfast[®] or Allevia[®]) 5 days before the appointment

If they need to take any of these medicines to treat an allergic reaction in the days before their appointment, please let us know and we can re-schedule.

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

Your child does not need to stop any other medicines, including asthma inhalers and nasal sprays.

When you come to your child's appointment, please bring:

- photos of the allergic reactions that they have had
- all of the medicines that your child currently takes, (including any inhalers). If they use a spacer device, please also bring this with you

- your child's emergency medicines (such as antihistamines and their adrenaline auto injectors Epipen[®], Jext[®] or Emerade[®]) which should be with them at all times
- any previous clinical letters and information from other hospitals, especially if you are concerned your child might have an allergy to a medicine
- snacks and activities to keep your child happy, and to distract them during skin tests if necessary
- a list of questions for staff and team members

Your child's appointment

Our receptionist will check that we have your up-to-date contact information (address, phone number and GP information). Your child might have their height and weight measured by our nursing team.

If your child is under 1 year old, they will need to have their clothes removed to be weighed. If they are older than 1 year, they only need to remove their shoes. Please bring your child's red book (personal child health record) with you, so the weight and height can be recorded.

If you have a buggy with you, please leave it in the buggy park area, at the entrance of the department. Please keep any valuables with you.

Please arrive on time for your appointment. If you are more than **10 minutes late** the appointment will be cancelled. This is because it would delay the clinic and lead to longer waiting times for other patients. Your appointment will be rebooked for another date.

While you are waiting

You can bring any toys or electrical devices that your child would like, to occupy them while they wait.

WiFi

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

- 1 Go to your WiFi settings and select 'NHS WiFi'
- 2 Connect.
- 3 Read and accept the terms and conditions.
- 4 You will then be connected.

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

Food and drink

You can bring snacks for your child to help them stay comfortable during their appointment. Please do not bring hot drinks.

Many of our patients have food allergies. To keep everyone safe, do not let your child eat in the reception area, and supervise your child at all times.

It is very important that no food is dropped or left unattended in the clinic.

Your child's appointment

Your child will see different specialists, including doctors, nurses, dietitians, and possibly psychologists.

Your child might have allergy tests, including skin prick testing and lung function testing. More information about the different allergy tests is below. We might 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 advise you on avoiding foods your child is allergic to, and suggest suitable alternatives. It is important to make sure your child is having a balanced diet within the limitations of their allergies.

We are part of a large teaching hospital, and have an international reputation for our allergy services. Because of this, we have medical, nursing and other healthcare students observing clinics. If you would prefer a student was not in the consultation, please let one of the team know. This will not affect your child's care.

Allergy tests

The team will discuss with you which tests are most appropriate for your child. The following tests can be done in the outpatient clinic:

- skin prick tests
- specific IgE blood tests
- lung function tests

Skin prick tests (SPTs)

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

SPTs are done by our nurse and dietitians, but the results need expert interpretation to be useful. The diagnosis of an allergy requires 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, shellfish, sesame, soya, pollens, house dust mites, weeds, and some animals.

If you suspect fresh fruit or vegetables are causing a problem, and want your child to be tested for these, please bring a small amount of each item with you (in separate containers).

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

- 1 Letters or numbers are drawn on the skin so we know where each allergen should be applied.

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, and it will not hurt, but it can feel sharp.



- 2 After 10 to 15 minutes, a small, itchy bump (wheal) might appear where the SPT was done.

This is measured and can help to diagnose an allergy.



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

It's important to not let your child scratch the test area, as it can make the itching worse and makes it difficult to measure the wheal accurately.



SPTs can be upsetting for younger children, but distracting them during the test can be really helpful. You might want to bring a favourite toy or hand-held game to the appointment, to help distract your child while they are having a SPT.

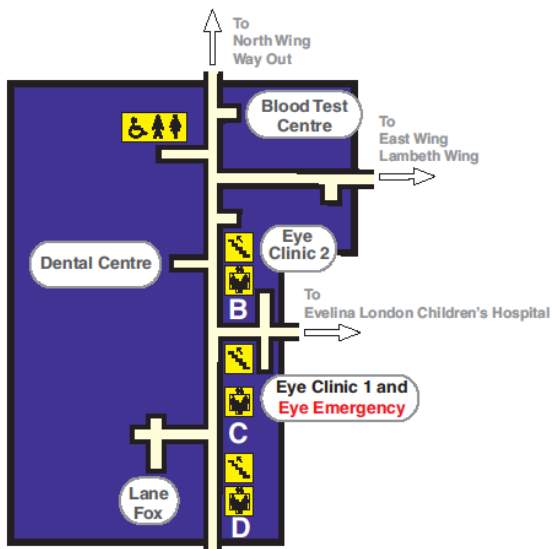
Allergen-specific IgE blood tests

Sometimes, it is not possible to do SPTs on a child. In these cases, a blood test can give us similar information. We often do skin and blood tests together, to give us a more thorough assessment of your child's allergies.

Before the blood test, we can put on an anaesthetic cream on your child's skin. This will temporarily numb the skin and help to reduce the discomfort of the blood test. It takes about 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 tests

These tests can help diagnose and monitor asthma. One type of lung function test is spirometry. This measures how much air your child can breathe in and out. Spirometry involves blowing as hard as possible into a special tube that is attached to a computer. Children under 6 years of age tend to find this test difficult so it is used more in older children.

Another type of lung function test is a FeNO (fractional exhaled nitric oxide) test. This measures the amount of nitric oxide exhaled in the breath. It can help us monitor the amount of inflammation in your child's airways.

A FeNO test involves blowing into a small, hand-held machine. Children need to breathe out 'slow and steady' for this test, so it is usually fine for most children.

Some other lung function tests are done away from Otter outpatients department. We will always direct you to the right place.

After your child's appointment

At the end of the consultation you should have a plan for your child's ongoing care, results of the tests they have had, and more information leaflets. You should also be given an action plan for your child. This should be kept with you at all times, and can be copied to be kept by their school and anyone who looks after your child.

The plan might include a food challenge or supervised feed, a 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 and medicine challenges in our information, **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, nurse or dietitian you have seen agree this with you.

Taking part in research

Our services offer a range of complex treatments, and the chance to take part in a number of research studies. We want to improve your child's and family's experiences of living with allergies, while also trying to understand how we can prevent and treat allergic disease in the UK.

You will probably be asked to contribute to questionnaires while attending appointments as part of improving the experience we offer to families.

You might be offered information about research studies we are running. Taking part in these studies might involve completing questionnaires, more blood tests, or taking part in randomised treatment trials.

You do not have to take part in any study, but if you hear about one you are interested in, please ask us for more information.

Contact details

Otter outpatient department, 2nd floor,
Stairs (or lift) B, South Wing, St Thomas' Hospital,
Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7EH

phone 020 7188 3300 (listen to the options before you make a selection)

email gst-tr.allergypaediatrics@nhs.net

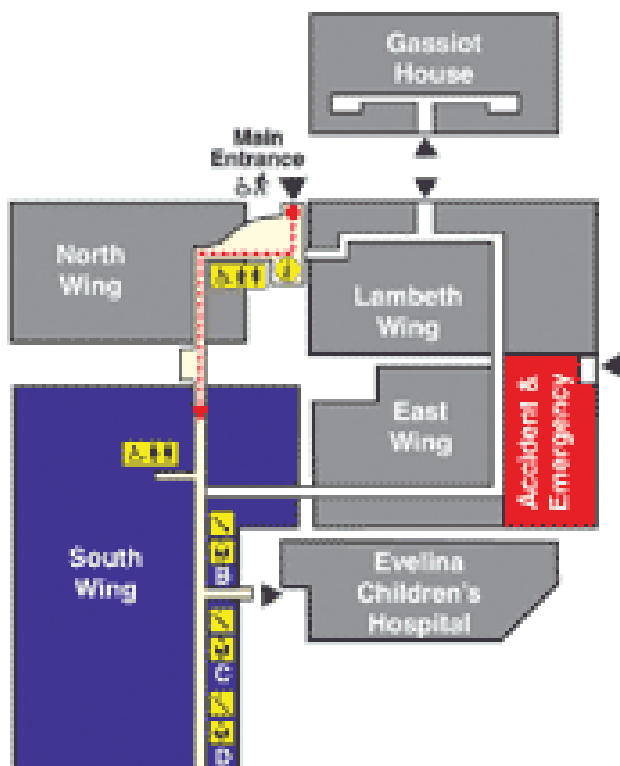
web www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/allergy

For more information on conditions, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit

web www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Directions to the children's allergy service

- Enter St Thomas' Hospital at the main entrance and turn right.
- Turn left into North Wing (green zone) and keep going straight on to South Wing (purple zone).
- Go to stairs (or lift) B on your left.
- Take the lift or stairs to the 2nd floor.



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A list of sources is available