



Leaflet produced by Western Sussex Hospitals Dietitians. For further information or to provide feedback please contact:

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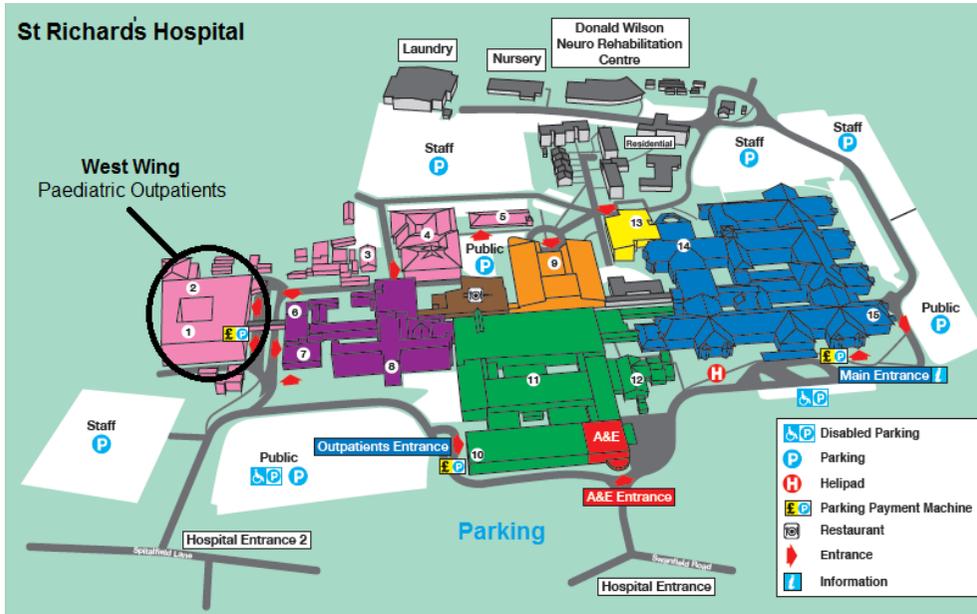
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Ward Food Challenge

Your child has been invited to come to the Children's Assessment Unit for a food challenge. The Children's Assessment Unit is on the Children's Ward on the 2nd floor of the Women & Children's block (West Wing) at St Richard's Hospital. On arrival you will need to press the buzzer to gain entry onto the Ward.



The nursing team on the children's assessment unit will contact you by telephone to arrange an appointment for the food challenge. They will leave a message on your answerphone for you to call them to arrange a convenient appointment if they are unable to speak to you. They will attempt to contact you on 3 occasions. If they have not managed to speak with you after 3 attempts or if you do not attend an appointment then the referral for the food challenge will be returned to the paediatric allergy team.

Food challenges are performed in hospital as it is the safest way of finding out if your child reacts to a food.

There are several reasons why you may have been asked to come in for a food challenge. Your doctor or dietitian have discussed with you why it is needed.

- **Diagnostic challenge** is used when it is unclear if a food is causing the reaction and the diagnosis of food allergy needs to be confirmed.
- **Resolution challenge** is used to see if a food allergy is outgrown and the food can be tolerated and reintroduced into your child's diet.
- **Demonstration challenge** is occasionally used for teenagers who have never been exposed or were too young to remember an allergic reaction. This will show what the initial stages of an allergic reaction feel like and will help them to learn how they respond to treatment.

Preparation before you come to hospital for the challenge

Stop any antihistamine treatment four days before the challenge

So we can get a reliable result from the challenge it is important that all antihistamine treatment is stopped for four days before the challenge. This should include medicines like Chlorphenamine (Piriton®), Cetirizine (Zirtek®, Benadryl®), Loratidine (Clarityn®), and Fexofenadine (Telfast®). Some cough medicines also contain antihistamine, please check, and if you are not sure contact the Children's Assessment Unit for advice. Eczema creams and asthma medicines are okay, and should be continued.

If your child is unwell

We will only perform the challenge if your child is well enough on the day. We won't perform a challenge if they have a tummy bug, have had a temperature in the last 24 hours, if they have been wheezy or if they have bad hay fever. Please contact the Children's Assessment Unit to let us know if your child is unwell so that we can rearrange the appointment.

Buy and prepare

Buy and prepare the food discussed with the paediatric nurse or dietitian for the food challenge. Bring it along with you in an air tight container.

Emergency Medication

Ensure that you have packed your child's auto injector, such as EpiPen, Jext or Emerade, antihistamine or inhalers if they have one. This medication may be needed if your child has a positive food challenge or as a precaution for the journey home from the food challenge.

Your child has open access to the ward for 72 hours following discharge from the children's assessment unit if you have any concerns

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Children's Allergy Team at Western Sussex Hospitals:

St Richard's Hospital, Chichester—01243 788122

Consultant—Dr Mwape Kabole Ext. 32862

Dietitian—Penny Barnard Ext. 33101

Paediatric Outpatient Department Ext. 32868

Children's Ward Ext. 32595

Children's Assessment Unit Ext. 32594

Negative food challenge

If your child has not reacted during the challenge this is called a negative food challenge. They should not eat the food for another two days in case of mild delayed symptoms such as tummy pain, diarrhoea or a flare of eczema. Delayed symptoms are not very common; most children are fine if they do not react on the ward. Delayed symptoms after a negative food challenge are very different and much less severe than the delayed symptoms that can be experienced after a positive food challenge, which is why our advice is different. There are no other special precautions and your child can undertake normal activities and diet. Please contact your dietitian or consultant if you think that your child has experienced a delayed reaction after the food challenge.

After 48 hours of the challenge it is important to introduce the food into your child's diet. You should aim for at least one portion each week. Contact your dietitian if you have problems reintroducing the food, if for instance your child does not like the taste of the new food.

A member of the children's allergy team will call you a few weeks following the challenge to see how you are getting on introducing the food.

Your child should have a light breakfast on the day of the challenge. A challenge will normally take half a day but you may need to be on the ward all day. Please bring a packed lunch for your child which they will be allowed to eat once the challenge has finished.

When you arrive you will have the opportunity to ask questions and you will be asked to sign a consent form. We try to involve the child as fully as possible in this process. Before the food challenge is started your child will be examined and the state of their general health recorded.

Your child will be asked to eat or drink increasing measured amounts of the challenge food at timed intervals. Portions will be very small to start with. Throughout the challenge a specially trained nurse will carefully monitor your child. Your child must stay on the ward during the challenge and for at least two hours after the challenge is complete. There are lots of toys & books available for your child to play with during the food challenge.



Food challenges can cause an allergic reaction, mostly involving the eyes, nose, mouth, skin or gut. Your child will be assessed throughout the challenge and any symptoms will be monitored and treated as necessary.

Anaphylaxis is a more severe form of allergic reaction and can involve the airway, breathing or circulation. Anaphylaxis is unusual during a food challenge, if needed we will use an EpiPen device to treat anaphylaxis. The nursing team will help a parent to give the EpiPen to a younger child, and will also help an older child to do this for themselves. You will stay on the ward until your child has fully recovered. Very occasionally a child will need to stay in hospital overnight after a food challenge, and we would expect one parent to stay with them on the ward overnight.



Positive food challenge

- If your child has reacted to the food during the challenge it is called a positive food challenge. They should avoid strenuous play or sport for the rest of the day, as this could bring on a delayed reaction. Normal toddler activities are okay, but try to avoid situations where they may become over excited. Very hot baths, fizzy drinks and large meals have also been connected to a return of allergy symptoms and should be avoided for a couple of days after the challenge. They should be fit for school the next day.
- Please contact the Children's Ward if your child has a return of allergic symptoms overnight or is not well enough to go to school the next day on 01243 831444.
- Your child should continue to avoid the food they were challenged with.