



Tape stripping & Patch testing

What is tape stripping?

Tape stripping is a technique used to increase the absorption of an allergen into the skin, with the aim increasing patch testing sensitivity. Each piece of tape applied and removed from the skin removes layers of cells that make up the stratum corneum or the outer most layer of the skin, thereby reducing the barrier layer of the skin. After the skin has been stripped, the patch tests are applied to the skin as per normal patch test protocol.

When should tape stripping be used?

Tape stripping may be used when patch testing weak allergens, such as ophthalmic medications, certain cosmetics or other topical products.

Tape stripping can also be beneficial when patch testing allergens that do not easily penetrate the skin.

It can also be used when patch testing is negative, yet the clinical history sounds suggestive of allergy or when a false-negative reaction on patch testing is suspected.

How to perform tape stripping:

Choose the site where the patch will be applied, such as the back or the inner arm. Ensure the area being stripped is sufficiently large for the patch to be applied. Apply the tape repeatedly and remove it quickly on the same area of skin approximately 30 times. Note that this figure can fluctuate between referenced authors; with others suggesting only 10-15 times is required. A new piece of tape is required for each strip, or at least every couple of strips.

A gentle adhesive style tape is used to perform the tape stripping, such as Micropore™ tape.