

# Food or Medication Challenge

## Information Sheet

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Your child has been invited to attend Dirleton Ward at the Royal Hospital for Children and Young People (RHCYP) for a **food or medication challenge**. The purpose of the challenge is to find out if he/she can safely consume the challenge food or medication.

### Why does my child need to attend hospital for the challenge?

It is necessary for your child to have the challenge in hospital due to the potential risk of an allergic reaction. If a reaction should occur, we will observe the symptoms and treat as is necessary.

### How long does the challenge take?

The challenge usually lasts 4-5 hours but may take longer if your child reacts or has difficulty taking the challenge food. It is therefore best to make provision to stay for the whole day. Your child will not be able to attend school on the day of the challenge.

### What should we bring?

- A drink, snack and packed lunch. We would ask that you bring in food your child has safely eaten before. Its best to have a light breakfast or snack before you arrive.
- Things to do. There is a small playroom on Dirleton ward that has lots of toys and games provided by the play specialist. However, you may wish to bring in a favourite toy and older children may wish to bring in a tablet (e.g. iPad) or schoolwork. Don't forget to bring in something like a book or magazine for yourself.

### What happens when I arrive?

Before the challenge we will need to check that your child is well.

- The nursing staff will check your child's weight, temperature, pulse, blood pressure and oxygen saturation levels.
- The doctor will briefly examine your child, then ask you some questions about your child's health. You or the child if old enough, will be required to sign a consent form.

### How is the food given?

We begin the challenge by offering your child very small portions of the challenge food or medication. If your child remains well this dose is increased every 20 – 30 minutes. If your child shows any clear symptoms of an allergic reaction, we will stop the challenge and give any medications required. Some oral discomfort in the mouth can occur during the challenge however this is not always a reason to stop the challenge.

Please try to explain to your child that they will be required to eat the challenge food. A reminder that with most food challenges the final stage involves eating a serving size portion of the food. We are happy to help encourage your child to eat the challenge food by adding it to something you have supplied such as crisps, biscuits or a yoghurt but we would never force any child to eat the food if they did not want it. This is similar for medication challenges however we would generally not add medications to food.

## What happens after the challenge?

You will be required to stay on Dirleton Ward for a minimum of 2 hours observation **after** the last dose of challenge food is given. If a reaction has occurred, the medical team will decide when your child is well enough to go home. In few cases, children may require an overnight admission to hospital.

When discharged home you will be given information on how to manage a delayed reaction (that is a reaction that occurs after you have left the hospital) as well as an on-going treatment plan and contact telephone numbers.

If the challenge food is tolerated, it will be important that it is included in the child's diet on a regular basis.

## Regular medications

You should continue to take any regular medications; however, you must **STOP** ANY antihistamine or medications containing antihistamine **5 days before** the food challenge.

### Antihistamine that your child might have include:

- Chlorphenamine maleate (also called Piriton)
- Loratadine (also called Claritin, Allereze)
- Fexofenadine (or Telfast)
- Cetirizine (or Zirtek, Piritize)
- Desloratadine (or Neoclarityn)

Antihistamines are also present in some cold and flu medications (e.g. Medised) These should also be avoided before the challenge.

- If your child is unable to stop antihistamine or has had to have an emergency dose, **please contact Dirleton Ward on 0131 312 1515**
- Do **NOT** stop other regular medicines e.g.: eye drops, asthma inhalers and nasal sprays.

## Cancellations

- Please do not attend the appointment if you or your child has tested positive for Covid 19 or if your child is generally unwell. We will rearrange the challenge for a day when your child is fit and well. **Please contact Dirleton Ward on 0131 312 1515**
- We have a high demand for our challenge service, and we are keen to use all available appointment slots. Please contact us as soon as you know you're unable to make the appointment so that we may offer the appointment to someone else. Please be aware that it may be some time before we can offer you another appointment.