

## The Allergy Alert Test Industry Protocols FAQs

### MANUFACTURER'S INSTRUCTIONS AND PROTOCOLS

#### What is the difference between manufacturer's instructions and protocols?

With every cosmetic product, salon tool or equipment, you will find manufacturer's instructions on how to use the item. For example, for colouring how to mix and apply. Manufacturer's instructions are typically detailed on the product or contained within the packaging.

All cosmetic products, including hair dyes, are covered by strict safety laws (the UK Cosmetics Regulation) and must go through an individual safety assessment by a professional cosmetic safety assessor before they can be sold. By law, some products must contain certain warnings; for example, "can cause severe allergic reactions" and "This product is not intended for use on persons under the age of 16."

Manufacturer's protocols are a written procedure that specify the requirements that can be followed in specific situations, such as when using a hair dye on a client in a salon. A protocol defines a pragmatic point of view, broader manufacturer specifics or information and a set process who does 'what', 'when' and 'how'. Manufacturer protocols are typically detailed on the manufacturer's website and associated literature. The NHBF and manufacturers' questionnaire approaches to the AAT are examples of protocols.



#### Why are the manufacturer's instructions and protocol sometimes different?

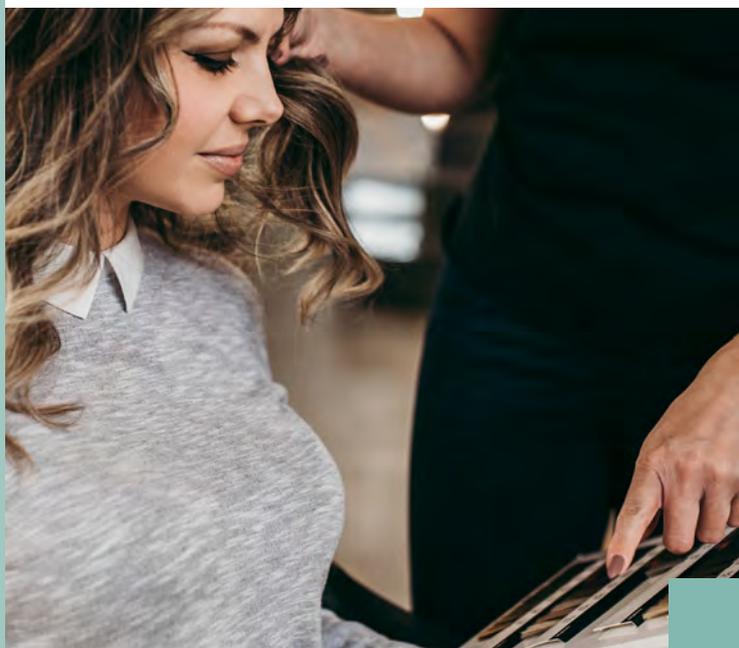
A protocol can be used to set out specific situations where a cosmetic product can be used in a different way from that specified in the instructions. This will only happen when the manufacturer has ensured that this is still safe.

For example, the instructions for many hair dyes will specify that an Allergy Alert Test (AAT) must be conducted before every use. The protocol for using a hair dye on a client in a salon uses a questionnaire approach to confirm that an AAT can be conducted on the client every 6 months, as long as this is safe. The other questions in the questionnaire, and the hairdresser's consultation with the client, are designed to ensure that this can only happen if it is safe to do so.

#### To be compliant with my insurance, should I follow the instructions or the protocol?

Firstly, it is important to check your insurance policy wording to understand whether your insurer has any specific requirements.

If you are in any doubt about whether the protocol applies to your situation, then follow the manufacturer's instructions. Manufacturers are also happy to answer any questions you might have about which situations their protocols apply to.



## ALLERGY ALERT TESTS (AATS)

### Why are Allergy Alert Tests (AATs) Required?

Allergies to hair dyes are very rare, most people will have no problems using hair dyes. However, in rare cases when allergies happen, they can be severe. The AAT is an important precaution and gives the client a signal that a reaction may occur if they go on to colour their hair.

Allergies can develop at any stage of life, and even after the same product has been used many times before with no problems. This is why it is really important to regularly repeat the AAT.

Read more about hair dyes and allergy at [thefactsabout](#).

### How often should AATs be done?

It may not be necessary to carry out an allergy alert test every time a returning client has the same service using the same product or same shade, provided the questionnaire approach has been followed.

If you are not sure if an allergy alert test is needed, you should do one. However, do not use on persons under the age of 16 and do not colour the client's hair if:

- The client has a rash on their face or sensitive, irritated and damaged scalp,
- The client has ever experienced any reaction after colouring their hair,
- The client has ever experienced a reaction to a temporary "black henna" tattoo in the past.

You need to record the answers provided by the client on the client's record card.

The answers to questions 7 and 8 in the AAT salon questionnaire cover if you have changed brand or product and if it has been more than six months since the client's last AAT. **You must record whether an AAT is needed, the date of the test, the results and whether the service can go ahead.** Both you and the client should sign/initial the client record card.



### What difference does it make if my client has had a temporary tattoo in the past?

If your client has suffered a reaction to a temporary 'black henna' tattoo in the past then you should **not** colour their hair. If the client has had a temporary tattoo and they did not experience a reaction at the time, they may have been sensitised by the ingredients used, so always perform an Allergy Alert Test (AAT) in these cases.

### How far in advance should AATs be done?

AATs should be done **at least** 48 hours before the service is carried out. This is because it can take up to 48 hours for an allergic reaction to develop.

### Can the AAT be carried out more than 48hr in advance?

The maximum amount of time allowed between an allergy alert test and the treatment or service will vary depending on the product manufacturer's instructions and protocols which must always be followed.

### How should AATs be done?

Follow the instructions which are provided by the manufacturer. These can vary, for example, some will say the product should be applied mixed (or diluted) or unmixed (or undiluted), usually behind the ear or to the inner elbow. Harmonisation of the test procedure is planned for the near future.





### How do I know, and what do I do, if my client has a reaction?

Reactions include reddening, itching, swelling or a burning sensation on and around the area where the allergy alert test or product was applied.

You must complete a visual check to see if there has been any reaction to the test when your client returns for their appointment. If you or your client suspects that a reaction has occurred, **do not use the product on them**. Advise your client to seek medical advice from a GP or dermatologist.

**Stay vigilant:** your client may develop a reaction, allergic or otherwise, while you are using a product, even if the AAT result was OK. If this happens, immediately stop the service.

**Get medical help immediately if your client becomes dizzy or faint or experiences any shortness of breath or swelling of the lips or throat.**

### Do I need to report a reaction to the manufacturer?

If your client reacts in any way to a product, you should inform the manufacturer as soon as possible. The manufacturer's contact details can be found on either the product's packaging, its label or instruction leaflet.

Helpful information on reporting unwanted reactions to cosmetic products can be found [here](#).

### How do I do an AAT if the client's service requires multiple products from different brands?

You will need to conduct a separate AAT for each brand as different brands use different ingredients. Multiple allergy alert tests can be completed at the same time, unless this is advised against by the manufacturer. Check the manufacturer's protocol.

If conducting multiple tests at the same time, you must ensure:

- The allergy alert tests do not overlap.
- You keep an accurate record on the client's consultation and industry tests record card of where each product/brand was applied.

It is best practice to:

- Divide and mark up the area to be tested.
- Number the areas (according to how many products/brands will be used)
- Apply the product to the numbered area using a cotton bud or similar as detailed in the manufacturer's protocols and/or instructions.
- Record the test and products/brands used on your client's consultation and industry tests record card immediately.

### Do I need to do a separate AAT for each shade from the same brand?

The composition of hair dye ingredients can vary a lot between shades, even from the same brand, as the composition of hair dye ingredients can vary a lot between shades, even from the same brand. The manufacturer will indicate if a test for each shade is required, and if multiple allergy alert tests can be carried out at the same time. It is always important to refer to the manufacturer's instructions or protocol.



NHBF One Abbey Court, Fraser Road,  
Priory Business Park, Bedford, MK44 3WH

Follow us @nhbfsocial



© NHBF January 2023