



Information for patients
and carers

Short synacthen test

What is a short synacthen test?

This is a blood test to see if your adrenal glands are producing a sufficient amount of the hormone cortisol. Synacthen is a synthetic drug which mimics the body's natural stimulating hormone, adrenocorticotrophin (ACTH).

What is cortisol?

Cortisol is one of the body's main steroid hormones. It is vital for life and we all need it:

- To cope with stresses such as illness, infection, surgery and trauma.
- To metabolise fats, carbohydrates and protein.
- To regulate the body's fluid balance.
- To regulate blood pressure.

Preparation

If you are taking steroids you will need to stop taking them 24 hours before the test. This is because the test is to see how much steroid the body produces naturally. Providing you are currently well, this is entirely safe to stop taking your steroids. Please contact your endocrinologist or specialist nurse if you are unsure about this.

You may eat and drink as normal before and during the test.

What the test involves

You will be asked to attend the Clinical Investigation Unit nurse- led clinic for 9am. The test is performed in the morning when cortisol levels are generally higher.

The nurse will need to put a cannula into your vein. This will then be rested for approximately 30 minutes. After this the nurse will take a sample of blood from the cannula. She will then administer synacthen into your vein. A final blood sample will be taken from the cannula 30 minutes after the synacthen has been given. The test is now complete. Once the nurse has removed the cannula from your vein you will be discharged from the clinic.

You will need to recommence previous steroid therapy on completion of test.

Are there any side effects of the medications?

Synacthen can cause mild side effects, such as nausea (feeling sick) facial flushing or palpitation (a fast fluttering heart beat). It may also cause wheeziness. If you have a history of asthma or have any respiratory problems please ensure that you bring your inhaler with you and inform a member of staff on arrival for your appointment.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact:

Endocrine specialist nurse: 01772 523533

Clinical investigation unit: 01772 522960

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk/doctor/pituitary-function-test.htm

www.pituitary.org.uk

www.labtestsonline.org.uk

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Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site

On 31 May 2017 Lancashire Teaching Hospitals became a smoke-free organisation. From that date smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking including Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal.

If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Cantonese:

如果你希望以另外一種格式接收該資訊，請和我們聯絡，不必猶豫。

Gujarati:

જો તમને આ માહિતી બીજી રચના કે ફોર્મેટમાં મેળવવાની ઈચ્છા હોય, તો કૃપા કરી અમારો સંપર્ક કરતા અચકાશો નહિ.

Hungarian:

Kérjük, vegye fel velünk a kapcsolatot, ha más formában kéri ezt az információt.

Polish:

Jeżeli chciał(a)by Pan/Pani otrzymać niniejsze informacje w innym formacie, prosimy o kontakt.

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿਚ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲੈਣਾ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਨਾ ਝਿਜਕੋ।

Urdu:

اگر آپ اس معلومات کو کسی اور صورت میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کرنے میں ہچکچاہٹ محسوس نہ کریں۔

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