

Information for patients and carers

Sweat Test

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Introduction

This leaflet explains the procedure for collecting a sweat sample.

What is a sweat test?

A sweat test measures the amount of salt (as sodium and chloride) that is in the sweat.

Why does this need to be carried out?

The test is carried out on children or adults who:

- Are having recurrent chest infections
- Have frequent and unexplained pale stools, or
- Are having problems gaining weight or growing properly

A positive result may mean that you or your child has cystic fibrosis (CF) but a final diagnosis will take into account other symptoms, clinical findings and test results. A normal result can be helpful in ruling out CF. It is important to diagnose this condition as soon as possible in order to begin appropriate treatment.

Who does this test?

The test will be carried out by a Biomedical Scientist at the Children's Clinic at Royal Preston Hospital.

How is the test carried out?

1. A small area of the lower arm or leg is wiped with alcohol to remove any oil from the skin surface.
2. Gel discs containing a compound called pilocarpine, which stimulate sweat production, are placed on the skin and secured in place.
3. A very small electric current is passed through the discs from a battery to further stimulate the sweating process. The discs are left in place for 5 minutes and then removed. There will be a red mark where the pilocarpine has stimulated the skin. This is usual and should fade within a few hours.
4. The skin is then carefully washed with pure water and dried.

5. A plastic coil is secured over the stimulated area. You will then be asked to wait for approximately 30 minutes for the sweat to be collected into the coil device. During that time you or your child are free to play, read, eat or drink, although salty foods, e.g. crisps, should be avoided to minimise any risk of contamination. Please also consider bringing a jumper to keep warm during this 30-minute interval.
6. The coil is removed and taken to the laboratory for analysis.

Does the test hurt?

The test is not painful, but some people experience a tingling sensation where the sweat has been collected. No needles are involved. Very rarely (1 in 60,000 cases), minor skin burns have been reported. Where this has happened, the burns caused no pain or discomfort during the test and healed within one to two weeks with little or no scarring. It is highly unlikely that you or your child will suffer a burn during the test.

The results

In most cases the results will clearly show either a normal or high salt level in sweat. Sometimes the results can be unclear, and the test will need to be repeated. In a few cases the test may need to be repeated for technical reasons such as not enough sweat being collected.

When will I get the results?

The results will usually be available the following day. Please telephone the doctor who referred you or your child for the test after 10am on the day after the test.

Contact details

If you have questions about the process of doing the sweat test, please contact the Clinical Biochemistry Department on **01772 523125** between 9am and 5pm.

If your child is unwell, the appointment should be cancelled by also contacting Clinical Biochemistry, an alternative date can then be arranged.

If you have further questions regarding the need for a sweat test for you or your child, please speak to the doctor who has referred you, as they can give you further information.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

www.labtestsonline.org.uk

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.

This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

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