

Patient information

High Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test for People with Suspected Cushing's Syndrome (Outpatient Setting)

Diabetes and Endocrinology Speciality

Your doctor has recommended you have this test to determine whether your body is producing excessive hormone called cortisol. Cortisol is an important hormone and helps us in stress and illness. It regulates your immune system, blood pressure, blood sugars and various other functions.

Excessive cortisol production can occur for a number of reasons and this condition is called Cushing's Syndrome.

What does the test involve?

- The test involves you attending the Royal Liverpool Hospital Medical Day Case Unit on two separate occasions to have blood tests.
- The rest of the test can be completed at home which involves taking steroid (Dexamethasone) tablets regularly at six hourly intervals.

It is important that you follow the instructions strictly for accurate results.

Precaution

- The steroid tablets are known to raise your blood sugar. If you have diabetes please check your blood sugar regularly. If the values are out of range, please contact your diabetes / endocrine team for advice.
- If you have gastritis/ acid reflux, steroids can worsen these symptoms.
- Psychiatric symptoms may develop or worsen.

Preparation

- Please stop the oestrogen containing medication such as oral contraceptive pills and Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) at least **six weeks** before having this test since they can affect the results. **Use alternate contraceptive method during this period.**
- If you are using steroids in any other form such as creams or inhalers, these preparations must be stopped for a short period before the test. Please discuss this with your endocrine doctor.
- You can take all of your regular medication during this test.
- Please avoid alcohol 24 hours before and during the test.

What will happen during the test?

- You will need to attend Medical Day Case Unit at 08.00am on day one and day three of the test.
- You will be given clear instruction about the test on day one by a member of staff.
- You will be given a prescription for short course of dexamethasone steroid tablets which you need to collect from hospital pharmacy. The schedule of taking these tablets has been included with this leaflet.
- You will need to take dexamethasone 2 mg tablets every six hours for two days starting at 09:00am on day one. Your first tablet will be given and signed for by the staff on day one after they have taken a blood sample.
- You will be taking the tablets at 09:00am, 3.00pm, 9.00pm, 03:00am for 48 hrs.
- Please set an alarm especially for 03:00am so you don't miss any.
- Please take the tablets strictly according to the time on the schedule for accurate results.
- You will need to attend Medical Day Case Unit again on Day three 48 hours after the first blood sample has been taken.
- Another blood sample will be taken at 09:00am.
- If you have missed any doses or have not been strict with timings as mentioned in the schedule, please inform the staff on the unit. This can significantly affect the accuracy of the result.

What will happen after the test?

- Once you have completed the test, the results will be reviewed by endocrine doctors and they will contact you directly if necessary.
- Further investigation and management will be discussed in the endocrine clinic.

High Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test Schedule

Start Date		Time	
End Date		Time	

Affix label

Day	Time	Test/ Medication (oral)	Tick
Day One	8.30am	Attend PIU Blood Test for ACTH and Cortisol will be taken by staff	
	9.00 am	Dexamethasone 2mg will be given by the staff	
		Prescription for rest of tablets will be given	
	3.00 pm	Take Dexamethasone 2 mg	
	9.00pm	Take Dexamethasone 2 mg	
Day two	3.00am	Take Dexamethasone 2 mg	
	9.00am	Take Dexamethasone 2 mg	
	3.00pm	Take Dexamethasone 2 mg	
	9.00pm	Take Dexamethasone 2 mg	
Day three	3.00am	Take Dexamethasone 2 mg	
	8.30am	Attend PIU on Ward 3c for the blood test	
	9.00am	Blood sample will be taken for Cortisol and ACTH by the staff	
End of Test			

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

If you have any query or do need to speak to doctors please contact on call endocrine doctor via hospital switch board:

Tel: 0151 706 2000

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2000

If you have any worries or questions about the test or the date is inconvenient please contact the Medical Day Case Unit

Medical Day Case Unit

Telephone number: 0151 706 2396

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2396

Opening Hours:

07:30 – 20:00 Monday to Thursday

07:30 – 16:00 Friday

Author: Diabetes and Endocrinology Department

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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