

## Patient information

# Low Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test for Patients with Suspected Cushing's Syndrome

Diabetes and Endocrinology Speciality

Your doctor has recommended that 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 the immune system, blood pressure, blood sugars and various other functions.

Excessive cortisol production can occur for number of reasons and this condition is called Cushing's syndrome. The test will help us confirming the diagnosis of Cushing's syndrome.

This test can be used sometimes to identify other conditions such as PCOS (polycystic ovarian syndrome) and non-classical CAH (congenital adrenal hyperplasia) from adrenal /ovarian tumours.

### What does the test involve?

- This test involves you attending 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 raise your blood sugar. Please check your blood sugar regularly if you have diabetes. If the values are out of range, please contact your diabetes/endocrine team for advice.
- If you have any gastritis or 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 methods during this period.**
- If you are using steroids in any form such as creams or inhalers, these preparations must be stopped ideally a week before the test, if this is not possible then at least two days before the test is acceptable.
- You can take all your regular medication during this test.
- Please avoid alcohol for at least 24 hours before and during the test.

## What will happen during the test?

- You will need to attend Medical Day Case Unit at 8.00am 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 0.5 mg tablets every six hours for two days starting from 9:00 am on day one. Your first tablet will be given and signed by the staff at 9.00am on day one after they have taken a blood sample.
- You will be taking the tablets at 9:00am, 3.00pm, 9.00pm, 3:00am for 48 hrs.
- Please set an alarm especially for 3:00 am so that you don't miss any.
- Please take the tablets strictly at the time on the schedule for accurate results.
- You will need to attend Medical Day Case Unit again on day three which is 48 hours after the first blood sample has been taken.
- Another blood sample will be taken at 9:00am on day three.
- If you have missed any doses or not been strict with timing 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 will contact you directly if necessary.
- Further investigations and management will be discussed at your next outpatient appointment

## Low Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test Schedule

<b>Start Date</b>		<b>Time</b>	
<b>End Date</b>		<b>Time</b>	

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Day	Time	Test/ Medication ( oral)	Tick
<b>Day One</b>	8.30am	Attend PIU Blood Test for ACTH and Cortisol will be taken by staff  An additional blood sample for Serum testosterone, DHEAS, androstenedione, 17 OHP must be taken when patient is being investigated for virilisation.	
	9.00 am	Dexamethasone 0.5 mg will be given by the staff	
		Prescription for rest of tablets will be given	
	3.00 pm	Take Dexamethasone 0.5 mg	
	9.00pm	Take Dexamethasone 0.5mg	
<b>Day two</b>	3.00am	Take Dexamethasone 0.5mg	
	9.00am	Take Dexamethasone 0.5mg	
	3.00pm	Take Dexamethasone 0.5mg	
	9.00pm	Take Dexamethasone 0.5mg	
<b>Day three</b>	3.00am	Take Dexamethasone 0.5mg	
	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.  An additional blood sample for Serum testosterone, DHEAS, androstenedione, 17 OHP must be taken when patient is being investigated for virilisation	
<b>End of Test</b>			

## 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**

**Review date: February 2025**

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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