Patient information

Short Synacthen Test

Diabetes and Endocrinology Speciality

Why do I need this test?

This test is performed when Addison's disease, a condition when the adrenal gland is not producing enough steroid hormones is suspected. The test is also used to assess the normal links between pituitary and adrenal glands. This test can also be used to diagnose congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) a condition caused by genetic abnormality in steroid hormone metabolism is suspected.

Are there any risks or side effects?

Rarely, people may have an allergic reaction (rash, pain or swelling at the injection site), may feel sick, wheezy, hot and flushed for a short time during the test. You will be monitored closely.

Are there any alternatives to this test?

Yes, Insulin stress test however this test is simpler and safer.

What would happen if I don't want this test?

We may not be able to find the cause of your symptoms.

Before the test

- If you are taking any form of steroid (by mouth, a cream or inhaler) you should not take or apply this on the day of your test. You should bring the dose with you so you can take this as soon after the test as possible.
- If you take Prednisolone take the dose as early as possible the day before your test and bring you next dose with you to take soon after the test.
- Do not take Dexamethasone on the morning of your test. You should bring your dose with you to take after the test.
- Do not take Hydrocortisone on the morning of your test. You should bring your dose with you to take after the test.
- You can eat and drink as normal.

- If you are taking the contraceptive pill or Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), you have to stop this for at least six weeks before your test ideally. If this is not the case, you should let your endocrine doctors know so they can take this into account while interpreting the test results. Please use alternate methods of contraception during this time.

What happens during the test?

- On the day of your test a nurse will check your details and explain the test to you. You will be on the ward for about two hours.

- A nurse will put a small tube (cannula) into your vein, blood samples will be taken and the injection of hormone will be given through this tube. This means you will not have to have lots of needles.

- We will take a blood sample to measure the level of cortisol in your blood. We will then give you an injection of Synacthen, a synthetic version of pituitary hormone to stimulate your adrenal gland to secrete cortisol.

- We will take further blood samples 30 minutes and 60 minutes after this injection to check your body's response.

- The cannula will then be taken out and you will be able to go home straight away. You can restart your regular medication straight away.

What will happen after 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.

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

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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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