

Endocrine Department

Synacthen Test

Information for parents and carers

Introduction

This leaflet aims to provide you with some information about this Endocrine test, what it involves and how long it takes. Endocrine tests measure the amount of hormones produced by the body. Hormones are responsible for the control of body functions as well as growth and development.

A number of special tests allow us to look at individual hormone levels or all the hormones levels together.

Synacthen Test

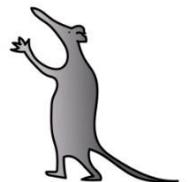
This test is performed to check if the adrenal glands are producing the right amount of the hormone cortisol. The Adrenal glands are located in the abdomen (tummy) one lying above each kidney.

The adrenals produce a number of hormones including cortisol. Cortisol is one of the body's main steroid hormones and one of its most important functions is to help the body cope with stress such as illness, infection, surgery or trauma. Patients with suspected or confirmed low cortisol levels may be asked to have a Synacthen test. This will establish if the adrenals are working normally.

How do I prepare my child?

If your child is taking hydrocortisone or any other steroid medication, (including inhaled steroids), **DO NOT** give it on the morning of the test. If your child is taking sick day dose hydrocortisone we cannot perform this test. If your child is taking **Prednisolone** medication, this must be stopped for at least **48 hours** prior to the test.

It is important to talk to your child about the test, explaining as simply as possible



What will happen?

For all endocrine tests we give drugs to stimulate the gland – in this case to produce cortisol. We then take a series of blood samples at timed intervals to measure the cortisol levels. This is to check that the glands are working properly.

How will it happen?

The most convenient way to give the drugs and take the samples is by placing a plastic needle (cannula) with a valve (tap) attached in a vein. This is usually on the back of the hand or the inside of the elbow.

We can apply a local anesthetic cream before doing the test to prevent pain or discomfort. The cream will take approximately 45 minutes to become effective.

Can my child eat and drink before the test?

Yes.

How long will the test take?

If your child wants the anaesthetic cream, the test should take about 2 hours.

Are there any side effects?

Like all medicines, Synacthen can cause side effects although not everyone gets them. Very rarely Synacthen can cause an allergic reaction with skin irritation, swelling or wheeziness. Flushing may occur especially to the face and some children may complain of feeling sick and sleepy. From our experience all these symptoms are rare.

What should we do if we cannot attend the appointment?

If the date or time is not convenient please contact either the Medical Day Care Unit (G4) reception and another appointment will be arranged. If the appointment is not needed please let us know as soon as possible and we will offer this appointment to another patient.

Medical Day Case Unit reception: 0151 282 4763 Monday – Friday 8.00 am – 5.00pm.

For further information

Please telephone the Endocrine Nurse Specialists on: 0151 252 5534
Monday – Friday 08:00- 17:00 or leave a message on the answer machine.

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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