

Arginine Test

This leaflet explains more about what an arginine stimulation test is, including the benefits, risks and what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is an Arginine Test?

The arginine test helps us to find out how well the pituitary gland is working. The pituitary gland, at the base of the brain, produces growth hormone. This is a “chemical signal” which stimulates normal body growth and development. In childhood, growth hormone is essential for normal growth.

How can I prepare for this test?

Sometimes your child will need some tablets or an injection before the test to prepare the pituitary gland for the test. The doctor will have given you instructions about this.

Please follow the instructions on the admission letter for time of arrival at the hospital. Your child should be free to go home by mid-afternoon.

To ensure reliable and accurate results, it is very important that your child has nothing to eat or drink from midnight the evening before the test. This means that he/she should not have breakfast or a drink on the morning of the test, except plain water. Once the test has been completed, usually by lunchtime, your child will be able to eat and drink normally. Lunch will be provided but if your child has a selective palate or requires a special diet then please bring something with you that you know he/she will eat. It is essential that he/she eats something before he/she can go home.

What happens during the test?

Please note that your child will need to stay on his/her bed for the duration of the test. Your child should therefore go to the toilet before the test begins as once the test starts he/she will not be allowed to leave the bed – a commode or bottle will be provided if necessary.

A local anaesthetic cream may be used to numb the area of skin where a small needle/plastic tube (cannula) is inserted into a vein in your child's hand or arm and left in place for the duration of the test. If used, this needs to be applied 45 minutes before the insertion of the cannula.

After the first blood sample has been taken, an infusion of arginine is given over 30 minutes in order to stimulate growth hormone production. Further blood samples will be taken after the infusion every 15 minutes for two hours. The cannula will be removed after lunch has been taken, following a final check of your child's blood sugar.

What are the risks?

The test is tolerated well and when it is infused slowly, side-effects are minimal, except for occasional nausea and vomiting. Blood sugar usually remains stable but late low blood glucose levels might occur. Your child's blood glucose will be monitored and if needed he/she will be asked to eat.

Contact us

Please contact the paediatric endocrine clinical nurse specialist on either 0787 659 7062 or 0778 685 6764 (Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm) if you have any questions about this.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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