

Standard Synacthen Test

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

What is a standard synacthen test?

This is a short one hour test that measures the level of cortisol produced by the adrenal gland. It is usually done if your doctor is concerned that there may be a problem with the production of cortisol.

Cortisol is a hormone that is produced by the adrenal gland in response to adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) production by the pituitary gland. Cortisol has several very important functions, including maintaining blood pressure, sugar levels in the blood and helping the body cope in time of stress e.g. illness, surgery or trauma.

How can I prepare for this test?

If your child takes hydrocortisone tablets, no tablets should be given after the lunchtime dose the day prior to the test and treatment should be resumed as soon as the test is completed. If your child takes prednisolone, specific instruction will be given to you by the doctor.

To ensure reliable and accurate results it may be necessary for your child to have nothing to eat from midnight the evening before the test. In this case water only may be given to drink in the morning. You will be informed by the medical team if this is so.

What happens during the test?

The test usually starts at 9.00am and lasts for one hour over which time three blood samples will be taken. To facilitate this, your child will need to have a small plastic tube (cannula) inserted into a vein in his / her arm or hand. A local anaesthetic cream / spray may be used to numb the area of skin where the cannula will be inserted. The cream will need to be applied 30-45 minutes before the insertion of the cannula. Your child will need to rest on a bed or a chair whilst the test is undergone.

After the first blood sample has been taken, an injection of synacthen (synthetic ACTH hormone) is given through the cannula. Further blood samples will be taken thirty and sixty minutes after the injection.

At the end of the test food and drink will be offered on the ward, if your child has been fasting.

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.



Reference: DIB_SST_01 Published: May 2021 Review date: May 2023