

Human Chorionic Gonadotrophin (hCG) Stimulation Test

The 3 days followed by 3 weeks test

This leaflet explains what an hCG test is 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 hCG Test?

The hCG test allows doctors to measure the amount of sex hormones being produced in the body naturally. Hormones are chemical messengers that switch on and off processes within the body.

HCG is a hormone that mimics the action of luteinising hormone which is normally produced by the pituitary gland.

In boys, luteinising hormone and therefore hCG tells the testes to produce the male sex hormone (testosterone). In girls, the hCG tells the ovaries to produce progesterone but this only happens later in development. As a result the hCG test is more often used in boys than girls.

It takes four days to complete the 3 Day hCG test. It requires an intramuscular injection to be performed on three successive days with a blood test both at the beginning and at the end (on day 1 before the first injection and day 4, 24 hours after the third injection). The hCG is injected into the leg muscle and may hurt a bit but as the injection is so quick the pain goes away quickly too.

You will need to come to St George's Hospital on days 1 and 4 but the injections that are needed on days 2 and 3 may be done at your local GP practice, unless this is needed at short notice in which case you may be required to return to St George's Hospital. The hCG will be prescribed from the hospital and you will collect it on your first visit. HCG vials should be kept refrigerated.

The 3 days followed by 3 weeks hCG stimulation test

If the amount of testosterone produced in the blood test on day 4 is low then the test will continue into weeks 2 and 3. In this case, a further four intramuscular injections, interspaced over the subsequent two weeks, will be required.

These are usually performed by your local practice nurse or GP but occasionally it may be necessary for you to come back to the hospital for them.

The test is completed by a blood test at St George's Hospital 24 hours following the last injection (in week 3).

If your child is having hCG injections over three weeks, the appearance of his genitalia may begin to change. This is quite normal and shows that the body is producing testosterone in response to the injections. Doctors may ask for clinical photographs to be taken for his medical records. We will ask for your permission to have these photographs taken.

It can take around six weeks to get the results of this test and they will be given to you at your next outpatient appointment at the hospital. However, if there is a need to start on new treatment before the appointment, the hospital will call you.

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 advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

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 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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