

Low Dose Synacthen Test

This leaflet explains what a low dose 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 your child.

What is a low dose synacthen test?

This is a short 45 minute 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 on the day prior to the test and treatment should be resumed as soon as the test is completed. If your child takes prednisolone or any other steroid tablet, specific instruction will be given to you by the doctor.

If your child is taking inhaled or nasal steroid medications, on the day of the test, the morning dose should be omitted and be resumed as soon as the test is performed. Please remember to bring your medication with you.

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 45 minutes over which time four 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 or spray may optionally 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 while undergoing the test.

After the first blood sample has been taken, the ACTH is given through the cannula. Further blood samples will be taken 20, 30 and 45 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 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.

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 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.

