

Overnight Dexamethasone Suppression Test

Patient information leaflet

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If you need this leaflet in a different language or accessible format
please speak to a member of staff who can arrange it for you.

اگر به این بروشور به زبان دیگر یا در قالب دسترس پذیر نیاز دارید،
لطفاً با یکی از کارکنان صحبت کنید تا آن را برای شما تهیه کند.

Jeśli niniejsza ulotka ma być dostępna w innym języku lub formie,
proszę skontaktować się z członkiem personelu, który ją dla Państwa przygotowuje.

Dacă aveți nevoie de această broșură într-o altă limbă sau într-un format accesibil,
vă rog să discutați cu un membru al personalului să se ocupe
de acest lucru pentru dumneavoastră

如果您需要本传单的其他语言版本或无障碍格式，请联系工作人员为您安排。

إذا احتجت إلى هذه النشرة بلغة أخرى، أو بتنسيق
يسهل الوصول إليه، يرجى التحدث إلى أحد الموظفين لترتيب ذلك لك.

What is the overnight Dexamethasone suppression test?

The overnight Dexamethasone Suppression Test is a screening test to check if your child has a rare condition called Cushing's Syndrome. Cushing's Syndrome develops if your adrenal glands make too much Cortisol (a type of hormone).

Symptoms of Cushing's Syndrome usually develop gradually and thus the diagnosis may not be clear for some time. There are two adrenal glands in your body which are found just above the kidneys.

They produce the hormone called Cortisol. In this test we give you or your child some medication called dexamethasone. This is a steroid which suppresses the production of Cortisol.

Notes

When will I know the results of the test?

The blood samples will be sent to the laboratory and results will go directly back to the doctor who requested the test. The doctor will usually write to you to let you know the results in about 7-10 days.

What are the benefits of the test?

The doctor looking after your child will have a greater understanding of the medical problem and thus the appropriate management can be initiated.

What are the risks and discomforts of the procedure?

The nurse conducting the test will ensure you are made as comfortable as possible. Numbing cream will be applied to the skin prior to inserting the cannula to minimise discomfort. It is rare for your child to have an adverse reaction to the medication.

Consequences of not having the procedure?

The specialist looking after your child may not have the full medical information to treat your child's symptoms.

What is Cortisol?

Cortisol is one of the essential steroid hormones we need to keep us healthy. It has many functions which include helping to regulate blood pressure and the immune system. It helps to balance the effect of insulin in regulating the blood sugar level.

It also helps the body to prepare and respond to stress which happens when a person has a severe infection, major trauma or has surgery. This hormone controls the heartbeat, blood pressure, blood glucose etc. This response is more commonly known as the 'Fight and Flight' hormone response.

In normal circumstances after the administration of Dexamethasone the body's production of cortisol will be suppressed and thus will be low; whereas if someone has Cushing's Syndrome the level of cortisol will remain high.

What is needed prior to the test?

There is no special preparation required before this test is carried out. You or your child may eat and drink normally. The test will be carried out on the children's unit Wards 3F, Whiston Hospital.

A suitable time and date for the test will have been arranged with you in advance.

You or your child will be admitted to the ward the night before the test and this usually means you will need to come up to the ward around 7pm the night before.

If you require more information about these arrangements please do not hesitate to contact the ward to speak to the nurse clinician on 0151 430 1791 / 2706.

It is hoped that the doctor requesting the test will explain the test to you in clinic prior to this being arranged.

Please do not worry about the test, we will try to make your stay in hospital as pleasant as possible and we will answer any of your questions prior to proceeding with the investigation on the day you attend.

How will the test be performed?

You or your child will be asked to lie flat throughout the test. A numbing cream called Ametop / Emla will be applied to the arm/hand over a large vein to help numb the overlying skin. This will minimise discomfort when the nurse inserts a small plastic cannula into the vein later on.

This plastic cannula enables the nurse to take blood samples and administer medication as required.

We will take a blood sample (from the cannula) at 8am to check the thyroid function and body salts (sodium & potassium). Late at night about 11pm to midnight another blood sample will be taken from the cannula to check for baseline levels of Cortisol.

After this sample you or your child will be asked to take 1mg (2 tablets of 0.5mg dexamethasone. The tablets should be swallowed with some water or allowed to dissolve in water for younger children, a liquid suspension of dexamethasone may be used as an alternative).

The next morning we will take further blood samples between 8am and 9am to measure the hormone cortisol.

On completion of the test you will be able to have some refreshments prior to going home.