



University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



High Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test

– information for patients

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www.uhb.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets.htm

Your doctor has recommended that you have a dexamethasone suppression test. This is a test to determine whether your body is producing too much of the hormone cortisol.

Cortisol is your body's natural steroid hormone. It is produced by the adrenal glands which sit above the kidneys. Cortisol is a vital hormone which is responsible for enabling your body to respond to stress and illness. Cortisol also regulates your immune system, blood pressure and blood sugar levels. Cortisol production is controlled by the pituitary gland which is a tiny gland underneath the brain. Too much cortisol production in the body can cause health problems including a condition called Cushing's syndrome.

Preparation for your test

- If you are taking oestrogen containing medications including HRT, you may need to stop them for 6 weeks before the test as they can affect the results. If you are stopping the contraceptive pill you must use alternative contraception if you wish to avoid pregnancy. Please discuss this with your endocrine doctor.
- You do not need to fast for this test.
- If you are using steroid creams or inhalers, please contact the Endocrine Unit for further instructions as you may need to stop using these medications for a short time if possible. This must be discussed with the medical staff first. Please call the unit if you are unsure about this.
- You can take all your other regular medication as normal.

What will happen during the test?

- You will need to attend the Endocrine Unit for 3 mornings for this test.
- Your appointments have been arranged as follow:

| Date and time: | Location of the tests: |
|----------------|--|
| Day 1: | Endocrine Day Case Unit |
| Day 2: | Area1, Outpatient Department |
| Day 3: | Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham B15 2GW |

- We will give you a short course of dexamethasone steroid tablets to take. The schedule of taking these tablets has been included at the end of this information leaflet.
- On the day of your first appointment, the endocrine nurse will explain to you the procedure and give you a prescription for dexamethasone which you need to collect from the hospital pharmacy.
- You will also be given a 24-hour urine collection bottles. The nurse will explain to you how and when to collect your urine sample.
- You will need to take a dexamethasone tablet (2 mgs) every 6 hours for 48 hours starting at 09.00am on day 1 (see schedule below).
- You will have to come back to the Endocrine Unit at 08.30am (not later than 09.00am) on day 2 and day 3 for a blood test and to hand in your 24-hour urine sample.
- Please remember not to take your 09.00am tablet on day 2 and day 3 until you have your blood test done by the Endocrine Nurse. Please bring your dexamethasone tablet with you so the nurse can advise when to take it after your blood test is done.
- Your results will be reviewed by the endocrinology doctors. We will inform you and your GP of your results and any changes to treatment or medication by letter. Sometimes it is also necessary for us to contact you by telephone, so please provide us with your home and mobile telephone numbers when you come in for your test.

- If you have any questions about your test or results please contact the Endocrine Unit.

What will happen after the test?

- The result of your test will be reviewed by the endocrinology doctor.
- You do not have to contact the department for your test result as you will be contacted directly if necessary.
- Your doctor will also be informed of the result of your test.
- If necessary, you will be called back into the clinic to discuss the result especially if you need to start on any treatment.
- Sometimes, it is also necessary for us to contact you by telephone, so please provide us with your home and mobile telephone numbers when you come in for your test.

Please remember the timing of your endocrine test is important so please report directly to the unit before 08:45am. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please contact the department and we will try to rearrange it for you.

Contact Details

If you have any queries please contact the Endocrine Nursing Team:

Email: EndocrineNurses@uhb.nhs.uk Tel: 0121 371 6950

If your call is not answered please leave a voicemail message stating your name, hospital number, contact number and your query. A member of the nurse team will return your call.

Your test: High Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|-------------|
| Start date/day/time | | AFFIX LABEL |
| Completion date/day/time | | |

| Day | Time | Test/medication required | Tick |
|--------|----------|---|------|
| Day 1: | 08.45 AM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended Endocrine Day Case Unit to start the test. Blood Test for ACTH and Cortisol | |
| | 09.00 AM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally) Start (first) 24 hour urine collection | |
| | 15.00 PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally) Continue 24 hour urine collection | |
| | 21.00 PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally) Continue 24 hour urine collection | |
| Day 2: | 03.00 AM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally) Continue 24 hour urine collection | |
| | 08.45 AM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended Endocrine Day Case Unit for a blood test (ACTH and Cortisol) Hand in your first 24 hour urine bottle | |
| | 09.00 AM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally) Start (second) 24 hour urine collection | |
| | 15.00 PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally) Continue 24 hour urine collection | |
| | 21.00 PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally) Continue 24 hour urine collection | |
| Day 3: | 03.00 AM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally) Continue 24 hour urine collection | |
| | 08.45 AM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attended Endocrine Day Case Unit for a blood test (ACTH and Cortisol) Hand in your second 24 hour urine bottle | |

END OF TEST



The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm or call 0121 371 4323.

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