



**University Hospitals Birmingham**  
NHS Foundation Trust



# Short Synacthen Test (SST)

– information for patients

**Building healthier lives**

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[www.uhb.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets.htm](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets.htm)

Your doctor has recommended that you have a short synacthen test (SST). It is a test to check the amount of cortisol in your body and to check how well your body can produce cortisol.

## What is cortisol?

Cortisol is one of the essential steroid hormones to keep you healthy. You can be unwell if this hormone is too high or too low.

## Preparation for your test

- If you are taking steroid medications (e.g. hydrocortisone, prednisolone, dexamethasone or plenadren), you will need to stop these medications for at least 24 hours prior to the test. If this is not possible, please contact the endocrine team on the number below for advice
- If you are taking oestrogen containing tablets (e.g. contraceptive pill or HRT), you will need to stop these medications for at least 6 weeks prior to the test. If you are taking the oestrogen pill for contraception, it is important that you consider alternative forms of contraception. If you are using oestrogen patch, this can be continued as it will **not** affect the result of your test. Please contact the endocrine team to discuss this further
- You should inform the endocrine team if you have significant asthma
- Please bring the medications that you have omitted with you
- The test will last for at least one hour
- Please come to the Endocrine Day Case Unit at least 5 minutes before your specified appointment time
- Children are not advised to attend. However, if this poses a particular problem for you please discuss this with us

## What will happen during your test

- You will be seated during the test
- You will be introduced to the person performing the test. An explanation will be given as to what to expect
- An initial blood sample will be taken to check the baseline level of cortisol in your body
- You will then be given an injection to stimulate your body's production of cortisol
- A blood sample will be taken 30 minutes later to measure the cortisol level
- The results will reflect how much cortisol you have and how well your body can respond to the stimulation

## What will happen after your test?

- You will be able to take your medication as usual immediately after test
- The result of your test will be reviewed by the endocrinology doctor/specialist nurse
- 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 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 at the time specified in your appointment letter. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please contact the department and we will try to rearrange it for you.

## Contact Details

Please go to the following location for your test:

**Endocrine Day Case Unit**

**Area 1A, Outpatient Department**

**Ground Floor, Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham**

**Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2GW**

If you have any queries please contact;

**Endocrine Clinical Nurse Specialist Team**

**Email: [EndocrineNurses@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto: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.



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](http://www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm) or call 0121 371 4323.

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Telephone: 0121 627 2000

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