High Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test

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 oral oestrogen containing medications including HRT, you need to stop them for six 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 alternative contraception with your GP
- You do not need to fast for this test
- If you are on any regular steroid medication (including steroid creams/ointments 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 medications as normal.

What will happen during the test?

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

Date and time:	Location of the tests:
Day 1:	
Day 3:	

- 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 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/Clinic at 08:30am (not later than 09:00am) on day 3 for a blood test and to hand in your 24-hour urine collection bottles if you were asked to collect urine samples
- If you have any questions about your test, please contact the Endocrine Unit

What will happen after the test?

- The result of your test will be reviewed by the endocrinology doctor
- It can take up to 4 weeks for the result of your test to be reviewed
- You do not have to contact the department for your test result as you will be contacted directly if necessary
- Your doctor (GP) 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 10 minutes before your appointment time. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please contact the department and we will try to rearrange it for you.

Contact Details

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham
Email (preferred method): **EndocrineNurses@uhb.nhs.uk**
Phone: **0121 371 6950**
(we aim to return telephone calls within 3–5 working days)

Birmingham Heartlands, Solihull and Good Hope Hospitals
Email (preferred method): **EndocrineCNSreferral@heartofengland.nhs.uk**
Phone: **0121 424 2487**
(we aim to return telephone calls within 3–5 working days)

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	• Attended Endocrine Unit/Clinic to start the test • Blood Test for ACTH and Cortisol	
	09:00	• Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally)	
	15:00	• Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally)	
	21:00	• Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally)	
Day 2:	03:00	• Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally)	
	09:00	• Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally)	
	15:00	• Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally)	
	21:00	• Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally)	
Day 3:	03:00	• Take Dexamethasone 2 mg (orally)	
	08:45	• Attended Endocrine Unit/Clinic for a blood test (ACTH and Cortisol)	
END OF TEST			

Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.

Accessibility

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