

Short Synacthen Test (SST)

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 or gel, this can be continued as it will not affect the result of your test. Please contact the endocrine team if you require further advice
- Apart from steroid and oestrogen-containing medications, you can take all your other medications as normal on the day of the test
- You can eat and drink as normal on the day of your test
- 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 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 your body was able to produce in response 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 or specialist nurse
- You do not have to contact the department for your test result as you will be contacted directly if necessary

Information for Patients

- 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 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

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham

Email (preferred method): **EndocrineNursesQEHB@uhb.nhs.uk**

Telephone: **0121 371 6950**

(We will aim to return telephone call within 3–5 working days)

Birmingham Heartlands, Solihull and Good Hope Hospitals

Email (preferred method): **EndocrineNursesHGS@uhb.nhs.uk**

Telephone: **0121 424 2487**

(We will aim to return telephone call within 3–5 working days)

Endocrine

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk.