

PATIENT INFORMATION

SHORT SYNACTHEN® TEST



Dept of Diabetes and Endocrinology

What is 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. The test is performed as a day case and can take up to 2 hours to complete.

What is Cortisol?

Cortisol is one of the essential steroid hormones produced by the adrenal glands. Your doctor has requested the test to ensure that your natural cortisol level is not too low.

What do I need to do before the test?

The test will be performed in the morning. You do not need to fast or change your diet prior to the test.

- If you are on steroids you need to adjust the time you take the steroids on the day before and the day of the short Synacthen® test.
- If you are taking Hydrocortisone tablets or any other steroid (for example, Prednisolone) do not take these tablets on the evening before the test or on the morning of the test.

If you take Hydrocortisone tablets once a day, you can take this in the morning on the day **before** the short Synacthen® test. If you are taking hydrocortisone tablets more than once a day, your last dose should be at lunch time the day **before** the test.

If you are on any other types of steroid tablets, your last dose should be more than 24 hours before the short Synacthen® test. For example, if you take prednisolone tablets, your last dose should be 24 hours before the short Synacthen® test. You can take your prednisolone tablet(s) before 7AM on the day before the test.

- Do not use any steroid inhalers or creams on the day of the test or for 12 hours before the test
- **Bring your steroid medication with you as you will be able to take it immediately after the test is completed.**
- If you are taking the oral contraceptive pill (OCP) or hormone replacement therapy (HRT) that contains Oestrogen it should be discontinued for 6 weeks before the test. You will need consider alternative contraception if you wish to avoid pregnancy.

If you are unsure about whether you take a steroid medication or oestrogen, or unsure about when to stop the steroid before the short Synacthen® test please contact our consultant team through the secretary.

How will the test be performed?

You will be introduced to the person performing the test. An explanation will be provided as to what to expect. You should remain seated during the test and will be observed by nursing staff.

An initial blood sample will be taken to check the baseline level of cortisol. You will then be given an intramuscular or intravenous injection of Synacthen® to stimulate your own body to produce cortisol. A blood sample will be taken 30 minutes and one hour after the injection to measure the cortisol level.

The results will reflect how much cortisol you have and how well your body can respond to the stimulation.

After the test

You will be allowed home and you will now be able to take your medication as usual.

Who will get the results?

Your doctor will be informed of the results.

It can take up to 3 weeks before your doctor has these results. Your doctor or the Specialist Nurse will contact you about the results, usually by a telephone appointment.

If you have any questions or worries, please do not hesitate to contact the Endocrine Specialist Nurse: Tel: 07563373193 or email

wah-tr.endocrinespecialistnurses@nhs.net

Alexandra Hospital

Endocrine Consultant Secretary on 01527 503890 or 01527 503030

Worcester Royal Hospital or Kidderminster Treatment Centre

Endocrine Consultant Secretary on 01905 733039 or 01905 760671

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am to 4.30pm and Friday: 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that a voicemail service is in use at busy times, but messages will be returned as quickly as possible.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.