

Short Synacthen Stimulation Test

Background

The adrenal glands are placed just above the kidneys and are responsible for producing a number of hormones; cortisol, aldosterone and androgens. Cortisol has a very important role in the body's response to injury or stress. If injury or stress occurs, the pituitary produces a large amount of a hormone, adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH).

ACTH stimulates the adrenal glands to make large amounts of cortisol. This high level of cortisol helps the body cope with injury or stress. The ACTH test is a way of testing that the adrenal glands are working properly and responding to ACTH as they should.

Sometimes the ACTH test is used to check whether the adrenal glands are making too much androgen.

Key points

Your child may eat and drink normally.

If your child is unwell (fever, vomiting or diarrhoea), please phone the Day Treatment Unit on 6456 3772 to cancel and rebook.

Arrival

Please go to the Day Treatment Unit. It is on the first floor at Clinic E. Take the Yellow or Pink lifts.

The Short Synacthen Stimulation Test

Once admitted a local anaesthetic cream will be applied. This cream is applied to your child's hand and/or inner elbow. This cream will numb the skin. This cream takes about an hour to work. An intravenous line can then be put in without causing any pain.

A needle is used to insert the intravenous cannula. Once in the vein the needle is taken out. A plastic tube is left lying in the vein. This plastic tube should not cause any pain. Once in, it stays in for the whole test.

At the start of the test a baseline blood sample is taken. ACTH (Synacthen) is given by injection into the muscles of the thigh or buttocks. Blood samples are then taken 30 minutes and 60 minutes after the injection. The blood samples are taken using the plastic tube. The blood samples are then sent to the laboratory.



Possible side effects:

It is rare for Synacthen to cause a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). This is why the test is only carried out in hospital.

After all the samples are taken, the intravenous line is removed and you child can go home if well. The test takes about two to two and half hours.

Results

The results will be sent to your Doctor in 2-3 weeks. You will receive these results at your next Endocrine Clinic or private endocrine appointment, or your doctor may phone you.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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Government of **Western Australia**
Child and Adolescent Health Service

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