

Your Synacthen test



Who is this leaflet for?

This leaflet is for patients who have received an appointment to have a Synacthen test at the Medical Day Case unit (MDU) at Royal Cornwall Hospital. Your appointment letter will give the time you need to arrive on the MDU.

What is a Synacthen test?

This is a test to diagnose any abnormalities in your adrenal glands. Medication is used to stimulate your adrenal glands into producing the hormone cortisol. The levels of cortisol produced are then measured and assessed.

Depending on your symptoms, your consultant may request an extended Synacthen test, which measures other hormone levels as well as cortisol. If so, we will explain this to you when you are admitted. If you are unsure please feel free to ask your nurse.

Why do I need it?

This test is performed at the request of your consultant endocrinologist. It will help your consultant to diagnose possible problems with your adrenal glands and plan any treatment you may need.

What is cortisol?

Cortisol is one of the essential steroid hormones. You may feel unwell if this hormone is too low or too high.

How do I prepare for the test?

If you are taking hydrocortisone tablets please **DO NOT** take these **on the morning of your test**. Please bring them along with you to your appointment so you can take them once the test has been completed. Otherwise you may eat and drink normally before your test.

What will the test involve?

On your arrival at MDU a nurse will show you to your bed or chair and complete the necessary paperwork. The nurse will also explain the procedure to you and ensure that you give your verbal consent.

1. We will take a baseline blood sample to check your level of cortisol.
2. We will then give you an injection of Synacthen to stimulate your body to produce cortisol.

3. We will take further blood samples 30 minutes (and possibly 60 minutes) after the Synacthen injection to measure your hormone levels. The results will show the hormone levels you have and how well your body responds to the stimulation.

What happens afterwards?

When the test is complete we will offer you some refreshments before you go home. You should also take any hydrocortisone tablets you have omitted prior to testing.

Are there any risks or complications?

Very rarely people may develop an allergic reaction to the Synacthen, for example a rash. This is easily treated with antihistamines and should have no long lasting ill effect.

Are there any alternatives?

No. There are no alternatives to this test.

What if I don't have the test?

If you feel that you do not want this test, you can decide against it. However, this may prevent accurate diagnosis of your condition and affect any future treatment. If you do decide against the test, please inform the MDU so that we can give your appointment to someone else.

When will I get my results?

Your consultant will receive and review your results, and either write to your GP or discuss them with you at your next clinic appointment.

General information

- Please note that Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust has a no smoking policy. This applies across the site to all the buildings and grounds.
- Car parking charges also apply.

Any questions?

We hope to make your stay as pleasant as possible. If you have any queries or concerns, please contact the Medical Day Case unit on 01872 253836 or:

Endocrine Nurse Specialist
Cornwall Diabetes and Endocrine Centre
Royal Cornwall Hospital
Truro
TR1 3LJ

Tel: 01872 254561 / 07823326070

Further information

For further information contact:
The Pituitary Foundation
Tel: 0845 450 0376
www.pituitary.org.uk

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

