

Patient Information

Low-Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test

Purpose

This test is used to investigate whether you might have Cushing's syndrome, where the adrenal glands make too much cortisol, a steroid hormone.

If you give a normal person too much steroid hormone they switch off their own production very quickly. In Cushing's syndrome they do not switch off this production, this is the basis of the test.

Preparation

If you are taking oral oestrogen or implants they will need to be stopped six weeks before the test as they can affect the results; this includes HRT and some oral contraceptive pills, (if so you may need to consider alternative contraception). If you are taking any steroid tablets, drops, creams, lotions or inhalers your doctor must know about them to decide if they can be stopped. Certain medicines can affect the test so please make sure your doctor knows everything you are taking, whether prescribed or not.

Procedure

You will be provided with nine (9) tablets of dexamethasone 0.5mg. Dexamethasone is a synthetic steroid; 0.5 mg is a small dose, about two thirds of the normal steroid produced by the body per day.

You will need eight (8) of these for the test (and a spare tablet in case one goes missing). Very rarely can these doses make one agitated, sleep poorly, thirsty or pass water; please continue the test, but let your doctor know, the symptoms get better once the tablets are stopped.

Arrangements for the Test

Arrange when you can have the blood tests for the test.

You will need a blood test at 8 - 10 am before you start the tablets, then two days later a second blood test at 8 – 10 am, after you have taken the tablets.

Please take one tablet every six hours for 48 hours – eight in total, as described below.

For the tablets you will take at 3 am in the morning you might need to set an alarm.

You will have forms for your blood tests given from your doctor.

| | | |
|------------------|------|--------------------------|
| Zero hour | 9 am | Blood test then tablet |
| | 3 pm | tablet |
| | 9 pm | tablet |
| | 3 am | tablet |
| 24 hour | 9 am | tablet |
| | 3 pm | tablet |
| | 9 pm | tablet |
| | 3 am | tablet |
| 48 hour | 9 am | Blood test, then finish. |

Results

Your doctor will see you with the results and explain them.

Any problems please contact Dr Philip Kelly on 020 3299 6085