

## Patient Information

# Low-Dose Dexamethasone Suppression Test

### **Purpose**

This test is used to investigate whether high androgens (male hormones) could be from a tumour, or whether they might be elevated within another condition for example polycystic ovarian syndrome. We might also wish to test for Cushing's syndrome, where the adrenal glands make too much cortisol, a steroid hormone, this is part of the same test.

If a normal person receives too much steroid hormone (dexamethasone) they quickly switch off their own production of androgens & cortisol. In androgen producing tumours &/ or Cushing's syndrome the glands 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) dexamethasone 0.5mg tablets. Dexamethasone is a synthetic steroid; 0.5mg 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 with the nurse on Guthrie when you can have the blood tests.

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.

The blood test forms will be on Guthrie for when you arrive.

<b>Zero hour</b>	9 am	Blood test, then tablet
	3 pm	tablet
	9 pm	tablet
	3 am	tablet
<b>24 hour</b>	9 am	tablet
	3 pm	tablet
	9 pm	tablet
	3 am	tablet
<b>48 hour</b>	9 am	Blood test, then the test is over.

### **Results**

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

Any problems please contact Dr Philip Kelly via Guthrie on 020 3299 3848