

Synacthen test



Information for patients

Outpatient Parenteral Antibiotic Therapy
Service



PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



Adrenocorticotrophic hormone (also known as ACTH or corticotrophin) stimulates your adrenal glands (situated just above the kidney) to produce a hormone called cortisol. The adrenal hormones are essential to life and help us to cope with stress (Pituitary Foundation 1994).

It may be that at this present time you cannot produce enough cortisol, therefore, your doctor's opinion is that it is necessary for you to undergo a test to assess the amount of cortisol you are producing.

Where possible, it is best to perform the test in the morning as this is when the normal cortisol production is high.

What does the test involve?

The test involves coming to the Outpatient Parenteral Antibiotic Therapy Service (OPAT) on Ward I 2, I Floor at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital for an hour in the morning. You will be assessed by a nurse before the test starts.

1. **On arrival a small blood sample will be taken to measure the amount of cortisol you are producing.** A small needle will be used to insert a fine hollow plastic tube (a cannula) into a vein in your arm so that a blood test can be taken to measure the amount of cortisol you are producing.
2. An injection of a synthetic form of ACTH called synacthen will be given to stimulate the release of cortisol from the adrenal glands.
3. 30 minutes after the synacthen injection a final blood sample is taken to measure cortisol to assess your body's response.

If you are taking steroid replacement therapy, for example prednisolone or hydrocortisone, please do not take them on the evening before the test and the morning of the test.

Are there any problems with this test?

The synacthen injection used does not usually cause any problems or side effects.

Some people may experience slight nausea or dizziness following the injection but this usually only lasts for a few minutes and does not require any treatment.

The test is not suitable for females who may be pregnant, please inform the nurse if this is a possibility

If you are on steroids for asthma we may only take the first blood sample but it is still necessary not to use any steroid inhalers on the morning of the test.

If at any time before arriving on the ward for your test you feel unwell, take your normal medication and inform the admitting nurse on arrival.

If you have any concerns about the test or the date is inconvenient please contact us.

Our contact details

OPAT

I Floor, Ward I2

Royal Hallamshire Hospital

Monday - Friday, 8.00am - 6.00pm

Telephone: **0114 271 2605**



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