

# Information for patients and carers

## Endocrinology

Medicine

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## What is a Short Synacthen Test?

This is a blood test to see if your adrenal glands are producing a sufficient amount of the hormone cortisol. Synacthen is a synthetic drug which mimics the body's natural stimulating hormone, Adrenocorticotrophin (ACTH).

## What is Cortisol?

Cortisol is one of the body's main steroid hormones. It is vital for life and we all need it:

- To cope with stresses such as illness, infection, surgery and traumas
- To metabolise fats, carbohydrates and protein
- To regulate the body's fluid balance
- To regulate blood pressure

## Preparation

If you are taking steroids you will need to **stop taking them 24 hrs before the test**. This is because the test is to see how much steroid the body produces naturally. Providing you are currently well, this is entirely safe to stop taking your steroids. Please contact your endocrinologist or specialist nurse if you are unsure about this.

You may eat and drink as normal before and during the test.

## What the test involves

You will be asked to attend the clinic for 9am. The test is performed in the morning when cortisol levels are generally higher.

The nurse will need to put a cannula into your vein. This will then be rested for approximately 30 minutes. After this the nurse will take a sample of blood from the cannula. She will then administer Synacthen into your vein.

A final blood sample will be taken from the cannula 30 minutes after the Synacthen has been given. The test is now complete.

Once the nurse has removed the cannula from your vein you will be discharged from the clinic.

**You will need to recommence previous steroid therapy on completion of test.**

## Side effects

Synacthen can cause mild side effects, such as nausea (feeling sick) facial flushing or palpitation (a fast-fluttering heart beat). It may also cause wheeziness. If you have a history of Asthma or have any respiratory problems, please ensure that you bring your inhaler with you and inform a member of staff on arrival for your appointment.

## Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact

Endocrine Specialist Nurse: **01772/523533**

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)

[www.pituitary.org.uk](http://www.pituitary.org.uk)

[www.labtestsonline.org.uk](http://www.labtestsonline.org.uk)

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[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets)

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If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**

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[patientexperienceandinvolem@LTHTR.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperienceandinvolem@LTHTR.nhs.uk)

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