

Patient information factsheet

Glucagon test

A glucagon test measures whether your body is able to produce adequate growth hormone and cortisol when under stress.

Growth hormone is produced by the pituitary gland and helps with growth and repair. As children we produce large quantities to grow, but as adults we require smaller amounts for wellbeing.

Cortisol is a steroid hormone. It is produced by the adrenal gland in response to a hormone released by the pituitary gland. In times of illness, your body produces greater amounts of cortisol than usual. If your body is unable to produce sufficient cortisol, you may not be able to cope with illness and could become very unwell.

The glucagon test is therefore useful to check whether your pituitary gland is working normally. It is used with people who have had pituitary gland surgery or if we suspect that your pituitary gland is not working properly.

Before your test

You will be required to stay at the hospital for the duration of this test so you can give regular blood samples. The test will last for around four hours.

Do not eat or drink anything apart from water after midnight before the test.

Contact the endocrine nurse specialist if you are taking the oral contraceptive pill or HRT as you may need to discontinue this six weeks before the test.

Bring something to read or listen to as there will be periods of waiting between blood tests.

The test will be carried out by an endocrine nurse specialist who will be able to answer any questions you may have before the test begins.

During the test

A small needle called a cannula will be inserted into a vein in your arm or hand. This allows your nurse to take your blood samples directly from the cannula without further use of needles.

When the cannula is inserted, a blood sample for growth hormone, cortisol and glucose will be taken. We will then give you an injection of glucagon into the muscle of your upper thigh. Four further blood samples will be taken at 90, 120, 150 and 180 minutes after the glucagon injection.

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Side effects

Common side effects of this test are feeling sick and headaches. Tell your nurse immediately if you have these symptoms and we can give you medication to help you feel better.

After the test

When the test has finished, your cannula will be removed and we will give you something to eat and drink. You will then be allowed home.

Results

On the day of the test we will arrange how you wish to receive your results. Results can either be sent to you by letter, or discussed with you in a clinic appointment. We will also send your results to your GP. This may take up to three weeks.

Further information

Please feel free to contact the endocrine nurse specialist if there is any information you do not understand.

Telephone: **023 8079 4710**, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4pm (answer phone service out-of-hours or if the nurse specialist is unavailable)

Email: **endocrinenurse@uhs.nhs.uk**

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