



Patient information

Metyrapone Suppression Test

Why have I been asked to have this test?

Your doctor has recommended this test for you to either help to diagnose or monitor your condition. Please read the following information carefully and ask us if the information is not clear to you.

What is the purpose of the test?

To see whether the body's mechanism for making the hormone cortisol is working properly. This test is usually done along with another test such as the Glucagon Stress Test or Growth Hormone and Cortisol day curves.

Who does the test?

A trained nurse on the planned investigations unit.

How does the test work?

Cortisol is a natural steroid hormone that is vital for health, it plays a part in regulating things such as blood pressure, blood sugar levels and the immune system and in helping the body respond to stress.

AdrenoCorticoTropic Hormone (ACTH) the hormone that causes Cortisol to be produced by the adrenal glands is made in the pituitary gland that sits in the base of the brain.

Metyrapone is a medicine that blocks the pathway of cortisol production in the adrenal glands for a short time, when this happens the pituitary gland does not see cortisol and produces more of the hormone ACTH. We measure the hormones ACTH, Cortisol and another hormone called 11-deoxycortisol.

When the doctors look at these results they can see if there is any problems with cortisol production and can tell, in most instances, whether the problem lies with the adrenal glands or the pituitary glands.

What will I have to do?

The test involves an overnight stay on the planned investigations unit.

Is there any preparation for the test?

If you are taking any hormone replacements with oestrogens in they must be stopped for 6 weeks before the test. If you have hormone implants, injections or patches please inform the doctor or endocrine nurse for advice on what to do.

Are any drugs or medicines used?

Yes. You will be given the medicine Metyrapone; the dose will be calculated according to your weight. You will be given a dose of hydrocortisone after the morning blood test has been taken because your cortisol levels may be low.

Are there any risks or side effects?

Metyrapone can sometimes make people feel nauseated but you will be given a snack along with the metyrapone tablet to help avoid this.

You are very unlikely to have any side-effects from the hydrocortisone as you will receive only one dose.

What happens during the test?

You will be given a tablet of metyrapone at midnight and then in the morning we will take a blood test between 8am and 9 am.

What happens after the test?

The blood samples will be sent to the lab to be analysed. They will be reviewed by the endocrinologist the following week and discussed with you, usually at your next appointment or by telephone if you need to make any adjustments or start any medicines.

You will be able to go home unless you have any other tests booked.

Are there any alternatives to the test?

There are alternative tests.

Your doctor will have considered all of your information carefully before recommending this test for you. Please discuss any concerns that you have with them.

Who can I contact for more information?

Charing Cross and Hammersmith Hospitals: Endocrine Specialist Nurse 020 331 11265

St Mary's Hospital: Metabolic Day Ward 020 331 21187