

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET – CORTICOTROPHIN RELEASING HORMONE (CRH) TEST

Your doctor has recommended that you take this test to help with the diagnosis and the management of your condition. Please read the information below carefully and ask us about anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

WHAT IS A THE PURPOSE OF THIS TEST?

Previous tests have shown that you most likely have Cushing's syndrome. Cushing's syndrome is a disease caused by excess cortisol production. Cortisol is a natural steroid hormone or chemical signal. It is produced by the adrenal glands, which are just above the kidneys. This usually occurs in response to instructions from the pituitary gland, which is a small gland beneath the brain. Rarely it may occur in response to instructions from another source elsewhere in the body. This test will help differentiate between the two possible sources of instructions; whether it is a pituitary source (Cushing's disease) or from elsewhere (ectopic).

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO TO PREPARE FOR THE TEST?

If you are taking any form of oral oestrogen therapy, you must stop this for 6 weeks before the test. You must also stop any steroid therapy, including topical preparations, for 6-7 weeks before the test. You must let the doctor know what medications you are currently taking.

IS ANY DRUG OR MEDICINE USED DURING THIS TEST?

You will be given an injection of CRH. This is a natural hormone (chemical signal) produced by the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus is part of the brain which controls hormone function by signaling to another part of the brain (pituitary gland). CRH stimulates cortisol production. Measuring how your hormones respond to the CRH will help us to know what type of Cushing's syndrome you have.

HOW LONG WILL THE TEST TAKE AND WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

You should expect your stay at the hospital to last about three hours. You may wish to bring a book or magazine to read or you may like to bring your personal radio/cd player (please bring your headphones).

We will check your weight when you come in so that we know the correct dose of CRH to give you. A small plastic tube will be placed into a vein in your arm using a needle. We will use this to take blood samples and to give you an injection without the need for any more needles. After we have taken the first blood sample, we will give you an injection of CRH. Over the next two hours we will measure your response to the test by taking more blood samples. After we have completed the test, you will be able to go home.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS OR SIDE EFFECTS OF THIS TEST?

Very rarely allergic reactions may occur. The doctor will have the necessary treatments available in the unlikely event of this occurring.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AFTER THE TEST?

We will send your blood samples to the laboratory for analysis. When your results are available, your endocrinologist will discuss these with you. This will usually be at your next clinic appointment. They will advise you about other tests you might need.

WHERE AND WHEN CAN I HAVE THE TEST?

This test can be organised only by appointment at Basildon Hospital Pathology Department or by the Endocrine Team at Basildon Hospital. You will be informed of when and where your test will be by the doctor who will organise it for you.

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

If you need any more information, please telephone the laboratory on [01268 524900](tel:01268524900) extension [3030](tel:01268524900) or [3015](tel:01268524900) or ask your GP.

Patient self-help groups and further information:

The Pituitary Foundation

PO Box 1944
Bristol BS99 2UB
www.pituitary.org.uk
[0845 450 0376](tel:08454500376)

Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.