

**Patient  
Information**

# Short Synacthen Test (SST)

## Introduction

Your doctor has recommended that you have a Short Synacthen Test (SST). This is a test to check the amount of cortisol in your body and to check how well your body can produce cortisol.

## What is cortisol?

Cortisol is one of the essential steroid hormones in your body to keep you healthy. You can be unwell if this hormone is too high or too low.

## Preparing for your test

- If you are taking steroid medications such as hydrocortisone, prednisolone, dexamethasone or plenadren the doctor will have advised you about stopping these medications before the test.
- If you are taking oestrogen containing medication such as the contraceptive pill or Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) you will need to stop these at least 6 weeks before the test. During this time it is important that you consider alternative forms of contraception. If you are using oestrogen patch, this can be continued as it will not affect the result of your test. Please contact the doctor for further advice if needed.
- You should let your doctor and the Medical Day Team know if you have severe asthma.

Reference No.

**GHP11547\_07\_20**

Department

**Medical Day Unit**

Review due

**July 2023**

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- Please bring the medications that you have stopped taking to your SST appointment.
- You should arrive at the Medical Day Unit for your SST test at least 5 minutes before your appointment time.
- Due to limited space we advise you not to bring any children with you to the appointment. However, if this causes a problem then please discuss with the Medical Day Unit staff.
- You will be asked to give your next of kin details when you attend for your test.

**What will happen during your test?**

- You will be seated during the test.
- You will then be introduced to the person performing the test. An explanation will be given as to what to expect.
- A cannula (small flexible tube) will be inserted into a vein in your hand or arm. This will be used to take a blood sample to check the baseline level of cortisol in your body. The cannula will remain in your hand or arm until the test is complete.
- The Synacthen will be given to you via the same cannula.
- A further blood sample will be taken, via the cannula, 30 minutes after the first one. This is again to measure the cortisol in your body.
- The result will show how much cortisol you have and how well our body can respond to the stimulation.
- The test will take at least 1 hour.

**What will happen after the test?**

- You will be able to take your medication as usual straight after the test.
- The result of the test will take about 2 weeks and will be sent to your consultant.
- Please do not contact the Medical Day Unit for your test results as you will be contacted directly if needed.
- Your GP will also be informed of the result of your test.

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If you wish to speak to the doctor please contact the Gloucestershire Hospitals Switchboard or refer to your past appointment letters.

**Gloucestershire Hospitals Switchboard**

Tel: 0300 422 2222

When prompted please ask for the operator then ask for your consultant's secretary.

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