

Patient information

Short Synacthen Test (SST)

What is Synacthen?

Your doctor has requested that you have a Short Synacthen Test. Synacthen® belongs to a group of medicines called pituitary hormones. The pituitary gland is a small gland inside the brain which controls other glands in the body including the thyroid and adrenal glands. The pituitary gland produces hormones which send chemical messages to various parts of the body and affects many bodily functions for example blood pressure, blood sugar levels and growth.

The adrenal glands sit on top of the kidneys and make the body's natural steroids which can also affect blood pressure, blood sugar levels and the absorption of protein and fat from food. Synacthen is used as a test to find out if the pituitary and adrenal glands are working normally.

Procedure

If you are taking regular steroids please do not take them on the morning of the test. Please bring them with you so that you can take them when the test has been completed.

The procedure takes approximately 1½ - 2 hours. You will be advised of the date and time to attend the Medical Treatment Unit (MTU). When you arrive your blood pressure and pulse will be taken and a small needle (cannula) will be placed in the back of your hand. An initial blood test will be taken through this. You will then be given the Synacthen injection. The time is noted and two further blood tests are taken 30 minutes and 60 minutes after the Synacthen has been given. Your blood pressure and pulse will be checked again, after which your cannula will be removed and you will be allowed home.

Benefits

Synacthen is not a treatment; it helps your doctor to make a diagnosis. Your doctor will discuss the results with you at a later date once they are available.

Risks

All medicines can cause side effects. Very rarely, Synacthen can cause an allergic reaction with faintness, wheezing, flushing and feeling sick. For this reason you will be monitored by the nursing staff. This is very rare, however, if you experience any of these symptoms please tell your nurse.

Treatment

Depending on the results your doctor may order further investigations; he/she will discuss with you.

Complications

There are no long-term complications associated with a Short Synacthen Test.

After care and discharge advice

There are no special precautions you should take following the procedure. You may return to work/home and drive as you wish.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the disabledgo website link below:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>