



# Synacthen stimulation test

## What is a Synacthen stimulation test?

Your doctor has referred you to us for a Synacthen stimulation test. This test involves being given a synthetic hormone, known as Synacthen, in order to assess adrenal gland function.

Synacthen (tetracosactrin) incorporates the active part of the stimulating hormone adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH). ACTH is naturally produced by your pituitary gland in order to maintain normal adrenal gland function.

## How is it performed?

Synacthen is administered as an intramuscular injection in the upper part of the arm in a similar manner to a vaccination. During injection, there may be some minor discomfort experienced but this is of a very short duration and is not part of any reaction to the test.

It will be necessary to collect three specimens of blood from you – one before the Synacthen injection and two afterwards, timed at half an hour and one hour following the injection.

## Is it a safe procedure?

Your own specialist is responsible for assessing your suitability to undergo this procedure. The Synacthen test is performed under medical supervision at a surgery, in hospital or at a designated collection centre. The reason for this is that in a very small number of patients (approximately 1 in 40,000), an allergic-type reaction to Synacthen may occur, similar to that which can be experienced with penicillin. In the very unlikely event of a reaction to the Synacthen, it would be evident before the completion of the test, so that measures could be taken to deal with it if necessary.

## Patient preparation and test conditions

- An appointment is required for this test.
- It is not necessary to fast prior to the test unless your doctor has ordered other tests for which fasting is required.
- If you are being treated with steroids, then, with your doctor's permission, you should withhold any corticosteroids, for example, cortisone (Cortate), hydrocortisone (Hysone), prednisolone (Panafcortelone, Predsolone, Solone, PredMix, Redipred), prednisone (Panafcort, Predsone, Sone) on the day of the Synacthen test until the test has been completed. If you are taking any other medication, your dosage should not be modified or discontinued unless your doctor has directed you to do so.
- As the Synacthen test is a medically supervised investigation involving the timed collection of specimens, you are required to remain onsite and must not leave the collection area until the test is completed.
- If you wish, you may have water, tea or coffee after you have been given the Synacthen, provided the collection has been performed for any other tests that required fasting.
- If possible, arrange for someone to drive you home after the test as Synacthen may have an effect on the central nervous system. It is advisable to be careful if driving a vehicle or operating machinery.

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**If you have any further questions about this test, please ask our collection centre staff or the attending doctor.**

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