

Late Night Salivary Cortisol Collection

What is a Late Night Salivary Cortisol Test?

It's a test which is used to look into any potential excess body production of cortisol (steroids). It involves collection of a sample of your saliva at 11 o' clock at night on two separate nights.

Why would I need this procedure?

Cortisol is a vital hormone that is responsible for enabling the body to respond to stress and illness and regulates your immune system, blood pressure and blood sugar levels.

The amount of cortisol you produce is not the same through-out the day. It is highest when you wake in the morning and lowest at midnight. Saliva contains cortisol derived from the blood. High levels of cortisol, such as those found in Cushing's syndrome are easiest to detect in a late-night saliva sample.

What are the symptoms that have led to me having this procedure?

You may be presenting symptoms of excess steroids such as weight gain to trunk of body plus rounding of face, fatty hump at top of spine/back, flushed appearance, extreme mood swings, muscle weakness, extreme hairiness, dark purple striae on abdomen and upper thighs.

What are the alternatives?

There are no recommended alternatives to this test.

What are the potential risks and side effects?

There are no known risks or side effects reported on this test. However, be extra cautious not to swallow the cotton roll to avoid choking.

What are the expected benefits of having the test?

You may have already had some tests to measure your cortisol level (blood and or urine). This test will provide further information and help your doctor see if you still have the usual morning/night differences in cortisol levels.

Preparation for your test

- You should not rinse your mouth, brush your teeth, or eat and drink 30 minutes before collecting your saliva.
- You should not smoke for two hours before sampling.
- Do not use prescription skin creams for one day before sampling.
- Do not eat black liquorice for two weeks before sampling.

What happens during the test?

You have been given two tubes:

1. Write your name and date of birth on both tubes. Collect saliva at 11 pm on two separate evenings (at 11 o'clock at night) within 1 week of receiving the tubes. It is important that you only provide samples if you are feeling well and not if you are acutely ill for any reason.
2. Hold the tube at the rim and remove the cap. Without touching the swab tip it into your mouth. Move the swab around your mouth, gently biting onto it until you feel that you can no longer prevent yourself from swallowing the saliva produced. This usually takes about 30-45 seconds but may take slightly longer.
3. Return the saturated swab to the inner tube which should be sitting in the outer tube – again without touching it with your hands. You may find this easiest by gently gripping the swab with your teeth and guiding it into the tube.
4. Replace the cap firmly onto the tube.
5. Record the date and time of sampling on the tube. Check that you have also written your name and date of birth.
6. Store your tube(s) in the fridge before taking to your GP for transporting to the laboratory or prior to you dropping the sample off yourself. In either case, remember to include the request form with your sample. It is fine to keep your first sample (in the fridge) until you have collected your second sample and take them both to your GP or lab at the same time so long as the samples arrive within a few days of the first tube being collected.

Will I have an anaesthetic?

No

How will I feel afterwards?

This test should not affect your normal activities of daily living.

How long will I be in hospital?

You do not need to stay in the hospital as this test can be done at home.

What should I do when I go home?

In most cases, patients resume their normal activities.

How soon will I be able to resume normal activities?

In most cases, this test should not affect your normal activities.

Will I have to come back to hospital?

Depending on the test results, further tests may be required.

When can I return to work?

There are no work restrictions involved for this test as in most cases, patients resume their normal activities after the test

Consent

Although you consent for this test, you may at any time withdraw such consent. Please discuss this with your endocrine team.

Sources of information

For queries concerning this leaflet or your procedure please contact:

Endocrine Team at ESHT

Telephone: 0300 131 5910 - EDGH and CQ

Opening Hours: 8am – 4pm (Monday – Friday except Bank Holidays)

Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

The trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Consultant Endocrinologists (ESHT):

Dr David Till, Dr Umesh Dashora, Dr P. Sathis Kumar, Dr Ashref Bdiri, Dr. Koshy Jacob, Dr Shakeel Ahmad, Dr Sadekh Elrokh

Biochemistry Consultants (ESHT):

Dr Yvette Lolin, Dr Hagosa Abraha, Dr Abd Al Hasan, Dr Indra Ramasamy

Endocrine Specialist Nursing Team (ESHT):

Mrs Maria Ravelo (Senior Endocrine Specialist Nurse)

Miss Angel Johnson (Endocrine Specialist Nurse)

Mrs Debby Gordon (Endocrine Assistant Practitioner)

The Endocrinology Department has agreed this patient information leaflet.

Next review date: February 2025

Responsible clinician/authors: Mrs Maria Ravelo (Senior ESN)
Mr Aldons Chua (TWS ESN)

© East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust – www.esht.nhs.uk