

# TETRACOSACTRIN (SYNACTHEN)

**Other names:** Short Synacthen Test  
ACTH (adrenocorticotrophic hormone) analogue



**Important note:** The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

## What is a short Synacthen test?

Cortisol is an essential steroid hormone found in your body. It is important for the metabolism of glucose, protein and fats, regulates the immune system and maintains blood pressure. It is released by the adrenal glands (small organs located at the top of each kidney) in response to stimulation by the presence of another hormone – adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH). Synacthen is a chemical copy of ACTH.

This test checks your body's response when stimulated by Synacthen. This response is determined by the changes in the amount of cortisol in your body.

## Preparing for the test

No specific preparation is required for the test for most people. Fasting is not required for the Short Synacthen test as it is not like blood tests for lipids or glucose where your doctor may request that you fast from midnight before the test.

If you are receiving steroid medication, for example prednisone or hydrocortisone, you will be asked to miss any morning dose you may normally take.

Before your test you will be asked about any previous Synacthen tests you may have had and whether you had any reaction to the test such as:

- skin reactions at the injection site (redness and/or pain) or itching or hives
- dizziness
- nausea and vomiting
- shortness of breath

## After the test

- The test is normally performed starting between 8 and 10 in the morning.
- A blood sample will be taken before the Synacthen injection is given (called the baseline cortisol blood sample).
- You will then be administered a small Synacthen injection either intramuscularly (into the upper arm, thigh or buttock muscle) or intravenously (into the vein). This stimulates the production of cortisol in your body.
- Another blood sample will be taken 30 minutes after the Synacthen injection. This is to measure the change in your cortisol blood level.
- The results will show how much cortisol you have and how well your body responds to the stimulation.

## Side effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

- Injection site reactions may occur but are rare i.e. bruising or swelling.
- Allergic reactions to Synacthen can occur occasionally and may be severe, such as swelling of face and neck. Other allergic symptoms are mentioned under 'Preparing for the test' above.

The list of side effects is **not** complete. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if any of these side effects are of a concern to you.

## Storage

Synacthen must be stored in a refrigerator at 2 to 8°C.

Keep all medicines out of the reach of children.

**Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist.**