Combined Anterior Pituitary Function Test – Advice for Parents and Carers

Children’s Services
Women & Children’s Services

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition / procedure, and to answer some common queries that you may have.
Introduction
The aim of this leaflet is to provide you with relevant information regarding a Combined Anterior Pituitary Function test.

Benefits
Having this test will assist your child’s consultant in deciding upon your child’s future care, management plan and if appropriate treatment.

Risks & Side Effects
A side effect of the Clonidine is that it may cause your child’s blood pressure to drop. Your child’s blood pressure will be monitored during and after the test.
Other known side effects are:
- Hot flushes (TRH and LHRH)
- Metallic taste in the mouth (TRH)
- Dizziness (TRH)
- Drowsiness
- Nausea
- Bruising may occur where the cannula was put in
- Possible infection of the cannula site. Please seek medical advice if the site becomes red or sore

Alternatives
There is currently no alternative method to test the function of your child’s pituitary gland.

Combined Anterior Pituitary Function test
Your child has been asked by your consultant to attend for a combined anterior pituitary function test. It is important your child is prepared for their test. This leaflet will help explain what will happen during their visit to the ward. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Children’s Endocrine Nurse Specialist or ask on the day of the test.

What is the pituitary gland?
The pituitary gland is usually a pea sized gland found at the base of the brain and is often called the master gland because it controls several other hormone glands in your body, including the thyroid and adrenals, the ovaries and testicles.
It helps to control the body’s functions by releasing hormones (special messengers) from both the front part (anterior) and the back part (posterior) into the bloodstream. These two parts release different hormones targeting different parts of the body. The anterior pituitary releases several important hormones that regulate a wide range of bodily activities – growth hormone, puberty hormones, stress hormone and thyroid hormone.

Why is my child having this test?
Your child is likely to be suffering from symptoms that may be due to the pituitary gland not working properly. In order to check that the pituitary gland is working correctly a test needs to be carried out. If a problem is identified with the pituitary it may be corrected with medication.

When will my child have the test done?
You will receive an appointment with a date and time to attend the Children’s Ward. Should you be unable to make the appointment, please inform the Children’s
Endocrine Nurse Specialist as soon as possible.

**What does the test involve?**

Your child will be given some medication. A number of blood samples will then be taken over a period of time.

**Please note that the test will involve you and your child being on the ward for the majority of the day.**

- On arrival you will be met by a member of nursing staff who will show your child to their bed. They will complete a short form in order to check your child’s details with you.
- Your child’s weight, blood pressure, temperature and pulse will be taken to obtain your child’s normal range.
- Before the test starts your child will have local anaesthetic cream (magic cream) applied to the back of both hands and inside elbow. The cream will be covered by a transparent plaster and it works by numbing the skin and vein ready for when the cannula (small plastic tube) is put in. It takes about an hour to work. If your child is over five, he or she may like to have a cold numbing spray before the needle instead. During this time you may take your child for a walk around the hospital or your child can stay and play in the playroom.
- Before the test is started you will be introduced to a play specialist. They are specially trained in how to play with children in hospital and how to help children having tests. If necessary they will help distract your child during the test. They are also there to help take away any feelings of discomfort, anxiety and fear they may have.
- An hour after the cream has been applied, it will be wiped away and your child will be ready to have the cannula inserted by a doctor / nurse. A nurse will squeeze your child’s arm or wrist – this makes the vein fill up with blood and makes it easier for the cannula to be inserted into the vein.
- The doctor / nurse will then insert the cannula into the vein; it will remain there for the duration of the test (approximately 4-6 hours). All the blood tests should be taken from same cannula.
- Once the cannula is in position the first blood sample will be taken.
- Your child will then be given a medicine in liquid form called Clonidine which stimulates the secretion of growth hormone. LHRH/TRH and Synacthen medications will also be given but through the cannula. Blood samples will be taken at regular intervals until the test is completed. The test takes about 4-6 hours.
- Your child will need to rest on their bed. They may feel drowsy, nauseous and have low blood pressure. Their blood pressure will be checked every 30 minutes during the test and for 3 hours after the test.
- Your child should stay on their bed until they are no longer drowsy and their blood pressure has returned to normal.
- The cannula will then be removed. Your child may then resume their normal activities and will be discharged home after eating a meal.
Can my child eat and drink prior to the test?
No, they will need to be nil by mouth at least from 3am (if not midnight) and ensure they have a drink of water or sugar free juice on waking. Your child can only have water or sugar free juice throughout the test, but once the test is completed, your child can eat and drink as normal.

Discharge arrangements
Once the tests have been completed, your child is no longer drowsy and their blood pressure has returned to normal and they have eaten and drank, they will be discharged home.

When will we receive the results of the test?
The results of the test take approximately 6 weeks. If you have not already received an appointment for a follow up appointment in the outpatient clinic one will be sent through the post.

The results of the test will be discussed with you at this appointment.

Additional Information
If you have any concerns please do not hesitate to speak to:
- A member of nursing or medical staff
- Your child’s GP
- NHS 111

Useful telephone numbers
Diana Princess of Wales Hospital
Children’s Endocrine Nurse Specialist
(01472) 875443

Rainforest Ward
(01472) 874111 extension 7520
Community Nursing Team
(01472) 875443

Scunthorpe General Hospital
Disney Ward
(01724) 282282 extension 2553
Community Nursing Team
(01724) 282282 extension 5635

References
The Pituitary Foundation – The Pituitary Gland
www.pituitary.org.uk
Patient.co.uk – The Pituitary Gland
www.patient.co.uk

Concerns and Queries
If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital
Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital
Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which situated on C Floor.
Alternatively you can email: nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Confidentiality
Information on NHS patients is collected in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons (e.g. providing care and treatment, managing and planning the NHS, training and educating staff, research etc.).

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. Information will only ever be shared with people who have a genuine need for it (e.g. your GP or other professionals from whom you have been receiving care) or if the law requires it, for example, to notify a birth.

Please be assured however that anyone who receives information from us is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential.

Zero Tolerance - Violent, Threatening and Abusive Behaviour
The Trust and its staff are committed to providing high quality care to patients within the department. However, we wish to advise all patients / visitors that the following inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated:

- Swearing
- Threatening / abusive behaviour
- Verbal / physical abuse

The Trust reserves the right to withdraw from treating patients whom are threatening / abusive / violent and ensuring the removal of those persons from the premises.

All acts of criminal violence and aggression will be notified to the Police immediately.

Risk Management Strategy
The Trust welcomes comments and suggestions from patients and visitors that could help to reduce risk.

Perhaps you have experienced something whilst in hospital, whilst attending as an outpatient or as a visitor and you felt at risk.

Please tell a member of staff on the ward or in the department you are attending / visiting.

Moving & Handling
The Trust operates a Minimal Lifting Policy, which in essence means patients are only ever lifted by nursing staff in an emergency situation.

Patients are always encouraged to help themselves as much as possible when mobilising, and if unable to do so, equipment may be used to assist in their safe transfer.

If you have any questions regarding moving and handling of patients within the Trust, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department you are visiting.

Northern Lincolnshire and Goole NHS Foundation Trust
Diana Princess of Wales Hospital
Scartho Road
Grimsby
01472 874111

Scunthorpe General Hospital
Cliff Gardens
Scunthorpe
01724 282282

Goole & District Hospital
Woodland Avenue
Goole
01405 720720

www.nlg.nhs.uk