

Sweat Testing

Pathology / Blood Sciences

Diagnostics & Therapeutics

Path Links

Northern Lincolnshire & Goole NHS Foundation Trust

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information about your condition / procedure, and to answer some common queries that you may have.



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Information for patients and visitors

Introduction

This fact sheet has been produced to provide information for people who need a sweat test. In addition, the leaflet explains how you can get the results of your tests and what they mean.

What is a sweat test?

A sweat test involves the collection of sweat and the measurement of the amount of salt that is in it.

Why does this need to be carried out?

The test is carried out on children or adults where cystic fibrosis is a possible diagnosis because they are having frequent chest infections, frequent and unexplained pale stools, problems gaining weight or growing properly or as part of a screening programme.

There are also other rarer indications for a sweat test. A positive result may mean that you or your child has cystic fibrosis (CF) but a final diagnosis will take into account other symptoms, clinical findings and test results. People with CF have a high amount of salt in their sweat.

A normal result can be helpful in ruling out CF. It is important to diagnose this condition as soon as possible in order to begin appropriate treatment.

Who does this test?

A Biomedical Scientist from the Chemical Pathology Department will perform the test. We would like parents (if appropriate) to be there as well.

Does the test hurt?

Some people experience a tingling sensation on the arm or leg where the sweat has been collected. No needles are involved.

How is the test carried out?

Special gels soaked in a chemical called pilocarpine that stimulates sweat production are placed on the lower arm or leg. These are tied in place and a small electric current is passed through the gel from a battery box to further stimulate the sweating process.

The test is not painful, although a tingling sensation may occur. The gels are left in place for about 5 minutes and then removed. There should be a red mark where the pilocarpine has stimulated the skin. This is usual and should fade within a few hours.

The skin is then carefully washed with pure water and dried. A small plastic coil is placed over the stimulated area and tied. You will then be asked to wait for about 30 minutes for the sweat to be absorbed into the coil device (do not let your child tamper with the collection coil once in place).

Your child can play as usual during the 30-minute period. The coil is then removed and taken to the laboratory for analysis.

The results

Most tests are normal, as cystic fibrosis is an uncommon disease and most cases are picked up shortly after birth.

In most cases the results will clearly show either a high (abnormal) or normal salt level in the sweat but sometimes the results can be borderline and the test will need to be repeated. In a few cases the test may need to be repeated for technical reasons such as not enough sweat has been collected. Many



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doctors like to confirm an abnormal sweat test with a second sweat test.

How long will it take to get results?

The sweat is usually analysed on the day of collection and results will then be promptly sent to the relevant Consultant / Doctor – see below.

Who will inform me of the results?

Most tests are normal and the result is sent to you and your GP by letter. If the test is borderline or abnormal, your child will be recalled within a few days for a repeat test and further discussions.

Further questions

If you have questions about the process of doing the sweat test, please contact the Paediatric Department or your Biochemistry Department at your local Hospital.

If you have further questions regarding the need for a sweat test in yourself or your child, please speak to the doctor who has referred you for this test as they can give you further information.

Benefits

The benefit of doing the test is that it will provide your doctor with important results which will help with diagnosis and / or treatment.

Risks

Some people experience a tingling sensation on the arm or leg where the sweat has been collected and a small red patch might appear on the skin. This will fade very quickly. While the system used within the hospital trust is superior to previous methods, burns during sweat stimulation have not been

totally eliminated. The manufacturers have estimated a frequency of 1 burn in 50,000 procedures.

Alternatives

There are no alternative tests that could be used to the one that you have been asked to undertake.

Contact details for Further Information

If you have any queries please ring your local laboratory:

Goole Tel. 01724 290033 Reception 0830-1600 (Mon-Fri)

Grimsby Tel. 01472 875264 Reception 0800-1700 (Mon-Fri)

Scunthorpe Tel. 01724 290005 Reception 0800-1700 (Mon-Fri)

Louth Tel. 01507 600100 Ext 1253 Reception 0830-1630 (Mon-Fri)

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 is situated on C Floor.



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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

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Grimsby
01472 874111

Scunthorpe General Hospital
Cliff Gardens
Scunthorpe
01724 282282

Goole & District Hospital
Woodland Avenue
Goole
01405 720720

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