

Short Synacthen Test (SST) for Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Information for patients

This information is for people who have had a Short Synacthen Test (SST) arranged by the Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) team in NHS Lothian.

We have arranged this for you as you have been taking steroid medication for your IBD. When lowering the steroid dose, you have been found to have a low cortisol ("stress hormone") level. When you are taking steroid medications, the natural production of steroids, including cortisol, is reduced. Your body can become dependant on the steroids it gets from the medication you are taking. Steroid hormones are essential for your body to function normally.

We have arranged an SST as a way of testing how well your adrenal glands are making the hormone cortisol now you are on a lower dose of steroids. The test will tell us if you can safely stop the steroid medication, or if you need a low dose of steroid medication for a longer period of time.

What is an SST?

You are given a small injection of a medicine (synacthen) that causes the adrenal glands make cortisol. This is followed by a blood test 30 minutes later to check if the cortisol level has risen normally.

What are the risks?

There are very few risks with this test. Very rarely you may have an allergic reaction to the synacthen. You may have a bruise where you have had the injection but this will fade.

Do I need to do anything before my test?

You should make sure you have not taken any steroids including inhaled steroids since 12pm (noon) the day before the test.

How do I get my results?

You should contact the IBD advice line on 0131 5371272 for the results after 48 hours and we will tell you the result.