

Saline suppression test for primary aldosteronism

Information for patients

Your endocrinologist has asked for us to arrange a test to see if you might be producing too much aldosterone (a hormone which increases blood pressure). If you cannot attend for the blood test please let us know so that we can arrange a more convenient time.

How should I prepare for the test?

We ask you to fast (avoiding both food and drink) from midnight before the test.

Some blood pressure medications can make this test difficult to interpret and your endocrinologist should have told you which medications should be stopped (usually 4 weeks before testing) and if an alternative blood pressure tablet should be started. We may ask you to measure your blood pressure at home in case the new medication needs the dose adjusting.

You may be trying to avoid salt in your diet to help to reduce your blood pressure, but you should include salt in your food for three days before the test.

We will usually arrange a blood test to check your potassium level about a week prior to the test but we may check this on the day if this is not possible.

What happens during the test?

On the day of the test you will be asked to lie on a bed for 5 hours. Two plastic cannulas will be inserted – one in each arm. We will take blood samples from one cannula and use the other cannula to infuse 2 litres of salt water. We will take a blood test each hour. Please let the nurses know if you feel unwell during the test.

Once we have taken the final blood test you can go home. Your endocrinologist should let you know if you are to restart any medications.

Are there any risks for me?

The test is safe in most people. If you have heart failure a different test may be more appropriate. You will likely need to pee more after the test because of the fluid you have received.

If blood pressure medications need to be changed ahead of the test you may find your blood pressure is higher than usual. Your endocrinologist will let you know if you need to take any different medication to help with this.

When will I get my results?

The results of the blood test may take 2-3 weeks to be processed, and you should hear from your endocrinologist once the results have returned. We may need to do further testing to confirm if your aldosterone levels are high.