

Overnight Dexamethasone Suppression Test

NB Anyone wishing to use this procedure should first check the website for the current version. Only the version on the website is authorised

Purpose of the Test

Investigation of Cushing's syndrome.

Principle of the Test

With normal adrenal function, endogenous cortisol production will be suppressed in response to an exogenous dose of dexamethasone.

Limitations and Contraindications

None

Specimen Requirements, Means of ID

Cortisol measured on serum (yellow top vacutainer). Samples must be labelled in accordance with the BSPS policy for rejection of samples available on the trust website:

<http://www.nhspathology.fph.nhs.uk>

Required Equipment and Reagents

Venesection materials

Dexamethasone 1 mg.

Instructions for Performance of Examination

PATIENT PREPARATION

None

PROCEDURE

Patient takes 1 mg dexamethasone orally at 22:00 h

Sampling: serum cortisol 9:00 h next morning

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

9.00 h serum cortisol < 30 nmol/L makes Cushing's syndrome unlikely

References

1. *Bouloux, PMG and Rees LH. Diagnostic tests in endocrinology and diabetes. Chapman and Hall Medical Press 1994.*

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