

## Dexamethasone suppression test (long or overnight)

<b>Description</b>	<p>Cortisol and ACTH test at 0900 hrs on day 0 prior to dexamethasone.</p> <p>Dexamethasone 2 mg orally on a 6-hourly basis strictly at 0900, 1500, 2100 0300 for 48 hrs.</p> <p>Cortisol and ACTH 0900 on day 2, i.e. 48 hrs after first blood sample is obtained.</p> <p>In some cases dexamethasone can be continued up to 72hrs and a further cortisol plus ACTH taken at 0+72 hrs.</p>
<b>Indication</b>	Differential diagnosis of Cushing's syndrome.
<b>Additional Info</b>	<p>Discontinue oral or implant oestrogen 6 weeks before the test since they may increase cortisol binding protein and cause artefactual measurements.</p> <p>Patients on drug-inducing enzymes (i.e. anticonvulsants) may rapidly metabolise dexamethasone.</p>
<b>Concurrent Tests</b>	N/A
<b>Dietary Requirements</b>	N/A
<b>Interpretation</b>	<p>Serum cortisol will suppress to 50% or less of the basal value in Cushing's disease. This is not seen in ectopic ACTH secretion, autonomous adrenal tumours of macronodular hyperplasia. The false positive rate is about 10% and rarely suppression of an ectopic ACTH source is seen. Useful, however not completely reliable, neither very sensitive nor specific.</p>
<b>Collection Conditions</b>	<p>ACTH in EDTA tube <b>ON ICE</b> sent urgently to lab and cortisol in white serum sample.</p> <p>State clearly on the request form and label samples. Time 0, Time +48 hrs.</p>
<b>Frequency of testing</b>	In difficult cases consider repeating (no adrenal tumour has been shown to have reproducible suppression and there are cases of cyclical Cushing's)