

Children's Services

Sweat test – information for parents

Your doctor has asked for your child to have a sweat test. At Addenbrooke's Hospital many children are screened using this test. This leaflet tells you what the test is for and what will happen during it.

What is a sweat test?

It is a test used to exclude the diagnosis of Cystic Fibrosis. Children born within Cambridgeshire are screened at birth for cystic fibrosis with the heel prick test, so there is only a very small chance that your child will have cystic fibrosis.

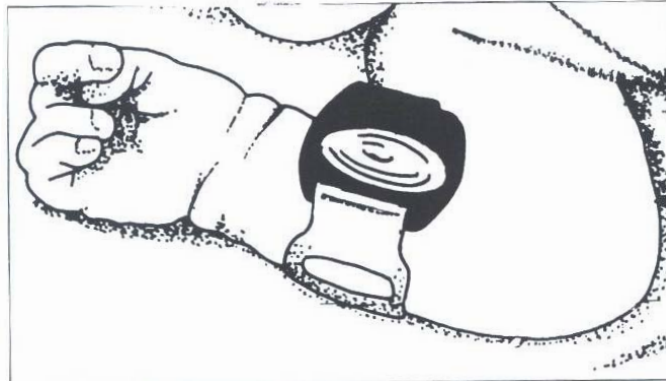
What is Cystic Fibrosis?

Cystic Fibrosis (CF) is an inherited condition, which causes some of the glands in the body to produce thicker and stickier secretions than normal. It may increase the likelihood of your child getting chest infections. Cystic Fibrosis may also affect the digestive system and make it harder for your child to absorb their food. Consequently, they might not put on weight very easily and may suffer from diarrhoea. However, some children who are affected may present with no more symptoms than an occasional chest infection, polyps (swellings) in the nose, or mild diarrhoea. The severity of the symptoms of the disease varies greatly.

What is involved in the test?

- Firstly the forearm or leg is cleaned with sterile water. Special gel pads are placed inside two small metal discs, one negative (black), and one positive (red) and then placed on the area. These are attached to a small metal box which stimulates the sweat glands for a period of five minutes by passing a low electrical charge between the discs.
- There are no needles involved; all your child may feel is a mild tickling sensation, if anything at all. Your child will need to stay still and should be encouraged not to touch the discs. You will be able to stay with your child throughout the test.
- The area where the gel pads have been is cleaned again with sterile water, dried and a collecting duct is applied to the skin. This is a small watch-like disc, which contains a coiled tube and a small amount of blue dye so we can see at a glance how much sweat is being collected. This is left in position for 25 to 30

minutes. You will be able to go and have a coffee during this time and return when the disc is to be removed.



- It may be necessary for this procedure to be carried out on both arms, one at a time, in order to obtain sufficient sweat for the test. Please be prepared to be at the hospital for about two hours.
- Once the collecting ducts are removed they are sent to the laboratory for analysis. The salt (chloride) within the sweat is measured and you will be informed of the result within 24-48 hours. If there is not enough sweat to give a result then the test will be repeated as soon as possible. Occasionally we do not get a conclusive result, and then the test will also need to be repeated.
- The doctor who organised the original sweat test will discuss the results with you. Please do not hesitate to ask questions at any time regarding the test.
- Please bring some warm clothing with you as this may help your child to sweat.

If you have any further questions, please contact:

Caroline Seward
CF Nurse Specialist
01223 216277



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS Stop Smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



Document history

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