

# Sweat Test

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## Information for parents

This leaflet can be made available in other formats including large print, CD and Braille and in languages other than English, upon request.

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Your child's doctor has advised he or she should have a sweat test to help find the cause of his or her symptoms. This test may also be used for screening.

This leaflet tells you about a sweat test and will help you to understand and explain to your child what will happen during and after the test.

## What is a sweat test?

A sweat test measures the amount of salt (sodium chloride) in your child's sweat.

## Why does this test need to be carried out?

This test may be requested, for example, if your child:

- has frequent chest infections
- has frequent and unexplained pale stools (bowel motions or poos)
- has problems gaining weight
- is growing slowly.

The test can also be requested to screen your child if there is a history of cystic fibrosis (CF) in your family. It is important to diagnose this condition as soon as possible in order to begin treatment.

People with CF have a high amount of salt in their sweat. A normal result can help your child's doctor rule out a diagnosis of cystic fibrosis.

A positive sweat test result may mean your child has cystic fibrosis. Your child's doctor will make a diagnosis from his or her clinical findings and all the test results.

## What will happen during the sweat test?

You will be asked to bring your child to the Childrens Outpatients at North tees hospital. The test takes about 1 hour to complete.

No needles or injections are involved.

Special pads containing a chemical called pilocarpine, that stimulates (encourages) sweat production, are placed on your child's lower arm or leg. These are held in place with sticky tape and a small electric current is passed through the pad from a

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special battery box. This further stimulates the sweating process. The pads are left in place for about 5 minutes and then removed.

There should be a red mark where the pilocarpine has stimulated the skin. This should fade within a few hours. The skin is then carefully washed with sterile water, and dried. A piece of filter paper or a plastic coil is then placed over the stimulated area and held in place.

You will be asked to wait for about 20 - 30 minutes for the sweat to be absorbed into the filter paper or coil device. The exact time will depend on the amount of sweat produced. During this time your child may read or play but is **not** allowed to eat or drink in case the area comes into contact with any salt.

The filter paper or coil is then removed and sent for examination in the laboratory.

## Who will do the sweat test?

This test will be carried out either by the Biomedical Scientists (people trained to perform laboratory tests).

## Does the test hurt?

The test is not painful, although some children may feel tingling on the arm or leg where the sweat has been collected.

## When will I be told the results of the sweat test?

The results of the sweat test are usually sent to the doctor who requested them. The consultant will then contact you either by telephone or letter with results of the sweat test.

The test results will usually show:

- an abnormal (high)
- a normal
- or an equivocal (uncertain) salt level in the sweat. You will be advised when your child will need to be seen again.

In a few cases the test may need to be repeated, for example, if the result is uncertain or not enough sweat was collected. Many doctors also like to confirm an abnormal sweat test with a second sweat test.

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## Contact numbers

If you need further advice or have any questions or problems about the sweat test, please contact the appropriate number below:

### University Hospital of North Tees

#### Childrens Outpatient

telephone 01642 624527

Monday- Friday, 9.00am- 5.00pm

### Further information is available from:

#### NHS Choices

telephone: 111 (when it is less urgent than 999)

Calls to this number are free from landlines and mobile phones  
or via the website at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Quality Assurance Team, University Hospital of North Tees or email: [patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk)

## **Comments, Concerns, Compliments or Complaints**

We are continually trying to improve the services we provide.

We want to know what we're doing well or if there's anything which we can improve, that's why the Patient Experience Team is here to help.

Our Patient Experience Team is here to try to resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PET leaflet, please contact:

telephone: 01642 624719

Monday – Friday, 9.00 am – 4.00 pm

Messages can be left on the answering machine and will be picked up throughout the day.

freephone: 0800 092 0084

Mobile: (can use text): 0779 506 1883

Email: [patientexperience@nth.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperience@nth.nhs.uk)

Out of hours if you wish to speak to a senior member of Trust staff, please contact the hospital switchboard who will bleep the appropriate person.

telephone: 01642 617617

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Patient Experience Team is available to discuss your concerns in person Monday – Friday, 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm. The office is based on the ground floor at the University Hospital of North Tees.

## **Data Protection and use of patient information**

The Trust has developed a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Information Governance Team.

telephone: 01642 833551 or email: [information.governance@nth.nhs.uk](mailto:information.governance@nth.nhs.uk)

University Hospital of North Tees, Hardwick, Stockton-on-Tees. TS19 8PE  
University Hospital of Hartlepool, Holdforth Road, Hartlepool. TS24 9AH

Telephone: 01642 617617

Fax: 01642 624089