

Dexamethasone Suppression Test

Rationale:

Dexamethasone is a cortisol analog that suppresses the secretion of adrenocorticotrophic (ACTH), and thus cortisol in normal patients, but not those with Cushing's Syndrome. A low, oral dose of dexamethasone is given at 2300 to 2400, with blood collected for a cortisol level at 0800 the following morning.

Patient Preparation:

No patient preparation is necessary

Materials:

Dexamethasone, 1.0 mg tablet

Plain, red-top tube(s) or red-gel blood collection tube(s)

Procedure:

1. Obtain a 1.0 mg oral dose of dexamethasone.
2. Administer it to the patient at 2300 to 2400.
3. Collect a plain, red-top tube(s) or gel blood collection tube(s) at 0800 the following morning.
4. Send labeled specimens and request slips to the laboratory promptly.

Reference Interval:

Normal: cortisol 3.0 mcg/dL

Cushing's Syndrome: cortisol >10 mcg/dL

References:

1. Tietz Textbook of Clinical Chemistry, 2nd edition, C. A. Burtis and E.R. Ashwood, eds, W.B. Saunders Company, publ., Philadelphia, PA, 1994, pg. 1840
2. Wallach, Jacques, Interpretation of Diagnostic Tests, 7th edition, Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, Philadelphia, PA, 2000, pg. 634