

Catecholamine Testing

What is a catecholamine testing?

Catecholamines are a group of similar substances released into the blood in response to physical or emotional stress. The primary catecholamines are dopamine, epinephrine (adrenaline), and norepinephrine (noradrenaline). They make you breathe faster, raise your blood pressure and send more blood to your major organs (brain, heart and kidneys).

Catecholamine testing measures the amounts of these hormones in the urine and/or blood. The test has been ordered because you have symptoms that suggest you may have an adrenal tumor that is secreting too much of these substances.

How is the test performed?

An appointment will be scheduled for you to have the test performed. You will be provided with the location and arrival time. Please plan for 1-2 hours of testing.

An intravenous (IV) cannula will be inserted into a vein in one of your arms and will remain there for the duration of the test. All of your blood samples will be drawn through this catheter, so you will not require any further needle pokes. You will recline and relax in a quiet space for about 30 minutes before the test begins. Once the test is complete, the IV will be removed and you will be able to go home.

Are there any risks or side effects to this test?

As with any blood test or IV insertion, you may have some bruising or redness at the site where the catheter was inserted. There is also a very small risk of infection.

How do I prepare for the test?

Starting four days before the test, you will need to stop eating foods that increase catecholamine levels. These include coffee, tea, bananas, chocolate, cocoa, citrus fruits, and vanilla. You must not smoke or have nicotine for at least 2 hours prior to the test. You must also stop certain activities 4 days before the test, such as any type of vigorous exercise, and avoid acute stress.

Medications containing acetaminophen need to be stopped 1 week before the test. Follow all medication instructions provided by your endocrinologist, who may need to adjust your medications in case they interfere with the testing.

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What should I do if I need to cancel?

If you need to cancel your appointment, please call 519-646-6000 ext. 64424 and state your name and test date. It's important to know that there may be a delay in rescheduling your appointment as the availability of test times are limited. If you need to cancel, we ask that you call as soon as possible.