

Procedures/Diagnostic Tests

Oral glucose tolerance test

You are scheduled to have an oral glucose tolerance test so that your doctor can find out how well your body absorbs and uses glucose (sugar).

Preparation

For at least 3 days before the test, you should eat an unrestricted diet rich in carbohydrates. If you are on a reduced, special, or low-calorie diet, let your doctor or nurse know. Diets that are reduced in total calories or carbohydrates can lead to incorrect test results. You should limit your alcohol intake during this period to one drink or less a day.

The day before the test, eat your regular evening meal; then fast for 12 hours. Children may be asked to fast for a shorter time. During the fast, please do not eat, chew gum, or drink anything except water until the test is completed. Also, do not smoke until after the test. Minimize activity such as walking or exercise the day before and the morning of the test.

Procedure

Before the test, a heparin lock will be inserted into a vein in your arm or hand. (The heparin lock will allow blood samples to be taken without repeated needle sticks.) A blood sample will then be taken. You may also be asked to give a urine specimen.

You will then be given a glass of liquid to drink. This liquid contains glucose. After drinking the liquid, your blood glucose level will begin to rise, and your pancreas will secrete insulin to help your body use and store the glucose. Samples of blood (and sometimes urine) will be taken at regular intervals to measure glucose, insulin, and sometimes growth hormone.

After you drink the medication, you may feel some of these sensations:

- nausea
- stomach ache
- headache

These side effects will subside during the test. The test will last 3 hours.

After the procedure

After the last blood sample is taken, and if no other blood tests are needed, your heparin lock may be removed. You may then eat and resume your usual activities.

If you have questions about the test, please ask. Your nurse and doctor are ready to assist you at all times.

Special instructions

This information is prepared specifically for persons taking part in clinical research at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center and may not apply to patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your health care team.

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