

Procedures/Diagnostic Tests

Calcium-pentagastrin test

You are scheduled for a calcium-pentagastrin test. It helps your doctor assess how your glands are working. Specifically, the test shows the activity of special cells in your thyroid. Throughout the test, blood samples will be taken to measure how your body responds to calcium and pentagastrin.

Preparation

- Do not eat or drink after midnight on the day of the test.
- An I.V. (intravenous line) will be placed in a vein in each arm. Calcium and pentagastrin will be given through one line; blood samples will be taken through the other.

Procedure

- You will be asked to rest in a reclining chair.
- Calcium will be given through the I.V. You may feel muscle weakness, numbness, tingling, or changes in your heartbeat.
- One minute after you have been given calcium, you will be given pentagastrin. You may feel like you have “heartburn,” an unusual taste in your mouth, tiredness, flushing, warmth, and nausea.
- Blood samples will be taken after calcium and pentagastrin have been given.
- The test lasts 20 minutes.

After the procedure

- The I.V. lines will be removed, and you may eat breakfast. You may continue your usual activities.
- The side effects from calcium and pentagastrin will go away when the test is over. There are usually no long-term effects from these substances.

If you have questions about the procedure, 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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