

Patient Information Leaflet

The Sweat test

Produced By: Children's Ward

**January 2013**  
**Review due: January 2016**



Your doctor has requested that your child has a sweat test.

### **Why is this needed?**

If a child presents with recurrent chest problems, weight loss or loose stools, then the doctor will request a sweat test to rule out the possibility of Cystic Fibrosis.

### **What is Cystic Fibrosis?**

Cystic Fibrosis is a genetic disease. A defective gene causes the body to produce abnormally thick, sticky mucus that clogs the lung and leads to frequent lung infections. These thick secretions also obstruct the pancreas, preventing digestive enzymes from reaching the intestines to break down and absorb food.

### **Why are we testing the sweat?**

In Cystic Fibrosis it has been found that the chloride concentration in the sweat is abnormally high, therefore this is the first line of testing.

### **Where do we need to go for the test?**

We carry out the sweat tests in the Children's Outpatients Department, which is situated next to the Children's Unit within the North Hospital.

### **When will it be, and how long does it take?**

A clinic nurse will carry out the sweat test, normally within three weeks from the request. You should allow up to an hour for this (although it may be completed more quickly).

### **What happens?**

We use a small device called a sweat inducer. Special gel pads, soaked in a chemical called 'pilocarpine' to stimulate sweat production, will be placed on your child's arm or leg. A very small current of electricity is then passed through the pads from a battery box. Once this is done (about 5 minutes), a collector is then placed over the area to collect the sweat. This can take between 20 and 40 minutes to collect enough. If after 40 minutes the amount of sweat collected in the disc is insufficient the test may be repeated on the other arm. It may be useful to bring your child's favourite toy and a drink with you.

### **Will it cause any discomfort?**

No, this test is a non-invasive procedure; it will not hurt your child, although they may feel a tingly sensation for a short time.

### **How long will it take to get the result?**

The results of the sweat test should be back with your Paediatric Consultant in approximately 3 to 4 weeks.

### **What happens if the sweat test is positive?**

If your child's sweat test is positive or borderline, we will repeat the test. Your Doctor will talk to you and advise as necessary.

### **Is my child going to need any further tests?**

There are 3 tests together that can diagnose Cystic Fibrosis. All three tests need to be positive for a diagnosis. The sweat test is usually done before any other tests are requested but the other tests that may be requested are a genetic test (blood test) to look at the chromosomes and a faecal elastase test (stool specimen examination) would also be needed. Again, your doctor will talk to you and advise as necessary.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Children's Outpatients Department on:-  
**(01983) 534945 between 9am - 4:00 pm Monday to Thursday and 9am -12:30pm on Friday.**

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues through NHS interactive available through Sky TV or online at: <http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

### **We Value Your Views On Our Service**

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive  
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust  
St Mary's Hospital  
Newport  
Isle of Wight  
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 61 61 61 or at [enquires@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquires@cqc.org.uk)

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: 01983 814280 or 07919 598549

Ref: **P/ST/4**