

Adrenocorticotrophic Hormone (ACTH) Test

Adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) is a hormone generated in the anterior pituitary gland (the pituitary gland in the front of the brain). ACTH regulates the amounts of the steroid hormone cortisol, which is secreted by the adrenal gland.

ACTH is also referred to as:

- adrenocorticotrophic hormone
- serum adrenocorticotrophic hormone
- highly-sensitive ACTH
- corticotropin
- cosyntropin (drug form of ACTH)

An ACTH test detects disorders linked with too much or too little cortisol in the body by measuring the levels of both ACTH and cortisol in the blood. These disorders might be caused by a variety of factors, including:

- a pituitary or adrenal malfunction
- a pituitary tumor
- an adrenal tumor
- a lung tumor

How the ACTH Test is Performed

Before your test, your doctor may urge you not to take any steroid medications. These can have an impact on the accuracy of the results.

The test is often performed first thing in the morning. When you first wake up, your ACTH levels are at their maximum. Your test will most likely be scheduled for very early in the morning by your doctor.

A blood sample is used to assess ACTH levels. A blood sample is obtained by taking blood from a vein, often the inside of the elbow. The following steps are involved in providing a blood sample:

- A healthcare provider first cleans the site with an antiseptic to kill germs.
- Then, they'll wrap an elastic band around your arm. This causes the vein to swell with blood.
- They'll gently insert a needle syringe into your vein and collect your blood in the syringe tube.
- When the tube is full, the needle is removed. The elastic band is then removed, and the puncture site is covered with sterile gauze to stop the bleeding.

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