

# Oral glucose tolerance test for patients with a red cell disorder

## Information for patients

This leaflet answers some of the questions you may have about having an oral glucose tolerance test for diabetes screening. It explains the purpose of the test and what you can expect when you come to hospital. If you have any other questions or concerns, please speak to the doctors or nurses caring for you.

### **Confirming your identity**

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your name and date of birth and check your ID band. If you do not have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address. If we do not ask these questions, then please ask us to check. Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

## **What is an oral glucose tolerance test?**

During this test a glucose (sugary) drink is used to check if your body responds normally to sugar in food. A normal response means that your insulin is working as it should be. An abnormal response means that you are either pre-diabetic or that you have diabetes.

## **Why do I need this test?**

People with an abnormality of their red blood cells (for example, sickle cell and thalassaemia) cannot be screened for diabetes with routine tests used by their GP. A glucose tolerance test is a standardised alternative screening method. If you have a red cell condition, your doctor or nurse specialist will discuss the reason for diabetes screening with you.

If you have iron overload because of long-term blood transfusion, your risk of diabetes is increased. In that case, an annual oral glucose tolerance test is recommended.

## **What are the benefits?**

The test may detect (pre) diabetes earlier than standard screening tests (HbA1c). Undiagnosed diabetes can lead to fatigue, dehydration and visual problems. In the longer term, untreated diabetes can cause damage to eyes, kidneys and nerves and comes with an increased risk of stroke and heart attack.

## **What are the risks?**

At the start of the test, we will ask you to drink a sugary drink. This can cause some people to feel nauseous (feeling sick). During the test you may experience hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar) or hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar).

## **Are there any alternatives?**

There are no standardised alternatives. However, people with access to a glucose meter at home could perform a glucose day curve themselves. If you would prefer to do this, please ask your doctor how to go ahead.

## **Do I need to prepare for my test?**

Before the test, you should have nothing to eat or drink (fast) from midnight, except plain water.

You may take your regular medication unless specifically told otherwise.

## **What happens before my test?**

A nurse will verify that you have been fasting correctly and explain the planning of the test. If the doctor needs to access your vein, to take a sample or provide hydration, a cannula (thin plastic tube) will be inserted.

If you have a blood transfusion on the same day as your oral glucose tolerance test, the test can be performed while you are having your transfusion. This does not apply to an exchange blood transfusion.

## **What happens during my test?**

The nurse will take a fasting glucose level using a finger prick method.

You will then be asked to drink a glucose drink within 5 minutes. The drink is very sweet and tastes of raspberries.

You can drink water for the duration of the test, but no other food or drink is allowed. We ask you to remain in the Haematology Day Unit during the test and not to exercise.

The test lasts for two hours from the time you have had the glucose drink. After that, another blood glucose sample will be taken.

## **What happens after my test?**

Once the test has been completed you will be able to go home.

The results of the test will be available directly. If your results are abnormal, the nurse will ask your consultant to inform you about further steps. This may not be the same day as your test, depending on how abnormal the results are.

## **Contact**

If you have any queries or concerns, please call the Haematology Day Unit on 020 3299 2963 from Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

## **Sharing your information**

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

## **Care provided by students**

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: [kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net)

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email [kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net)**