

# NIH Clinical Center Patient Education Materials

## Corticotropin releasing hormone (CRH)

During a corticotropin releasing hormone (CRH) stimulation test, your health care provider will give you an artificial form of corticotropin, a naturally occurring hormone. Blood samples are usually collected before, during, and after the test to measure how your pituitary gland and adrenal glands are working.

### Preparation

Do not eat, chew gum, or drink anything except for water after midnight the night before the test. Your health care provider will tell you if you should stop taking any medications before the test and will give you information about the test.

### Procedure

Your health care provider will insert a small tube into a vein (IV) in your arm an hour before the test starts. Using an IV catheter avoids repeated needle sticks. The CRH will be given through the catheter.

Once the CRH is given, it travels through the bloodstream and causes the pituitary gland to secrete another hormone, adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH). The ACTH then travels to the adrenal glands and causes them to release cortisol. During the test, blood samples will be taken at specific times to measure changes in cortisol levels over time.

Just after the CRH is given, you may feel a sensation of warmth that can last for up to 30 minutes. You may have a metallic taste in your mouth which can last for some time and then go away. There are no known delayed or long-lasting side effects from CRH.

The test will last about an hour.

### After the procedure

Most likely, your health care provider will remove the IV after the last blood draw. Once the test is completed, you may then eat and resume your usual activities.

If you have questions about this 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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