

## **DEXAMETHASONE SUPPRESSION TESTS (RAPID OVERNIGHT) FOR CUSHING'S SYNDROME**

Dexamethasone, a potent analog of cortisol, suppresses cortisol production in normal subjects but not in patients with Cushing's syndrome.

### **PREPARATION:**

Obtain from Pharmacy 1 mg of dexamethasone.

### **PROCEDURE:**

Administer 1 mg dexamethasone orally at 2300  $\pm$  30 min.

Request for following morning: Cortisol, AM. To be drawn during the period 0600 - 0900.

### **INTERPRETATION:**

Cushing's Syndrome is excluded if the plasma cortisol level is  $\leq$  5 ug/dL.

Levels > 10 ug/dL suggest Cushing's S. but may also be due to stress, failure to take the dexamethasone, treatment with phenobarbital or phenytoin (Dilantin), or endogenous depression.

### **NOTES:**

If specified (and as suggested in Ref. 2), a 15 or 30 mg dose of oral flurazepam (Dalmane) may be administered as a sedative concurrent with the dexamethasone to reduce stress-related cortisol elevations.

### **REFERENCES:**

Tyrell JB et. al. in Greenspan FS, *Basic and Clinical Endocrinology*, 4th Ed., Appleton and Lange, Norwalk, 1991, Chapter 12, p. 337.

Watts NB and Keffer JH, *Practical Endocrinology*, 4th Ed., Lea and Febiger, Phil., 1989, p. 210.