

SWEAT TEST

The sweat test is a simple, diagnostic procedure, which measures the amount of chloride (salt) in the sweat. It is the gold standard for diagnosing cystic fibrosis (CF).

What happens during a sweat test?

The sweat test is a painless procedure and there are no needles involved in this test. The test generally takes about 60-90 minutes, but in some cases it may take longer.

In the first part, a medicine that causes sweating (Pilocarpine) is put on a small area on an arm or leg. An electrode is then put over that spot. This lets the technician apply a weak electrical current to the area to increase sweating. A person may feel tingling or warmth in the area. This part of the test lasts about five minutes.

The second part of the test consists of cleaning the area and collecting the sweat in a plastic coil. Once collected, sweat is sent to a hospital laboratory to measure the chloride in the sweat.

In order to have accurate results, a minimum amount of sweat is required. If the amount collected is below the minimum, the test will need to be repeated a different day.

You may visit this webpage to watch a video that further explains the sweat test and shows how it is done: <https://www.cff.org/What-is-CF/Testing/Sweat-Test/>

What does the sweat test show?

A sweat test is performed to diagnose CF. Individuals with CF have an increased amount of sodium and chloride (salt) in their sweat.

For people with CF, the sweat chloride test may be positive shortly after birth. In order to obtain enough sweat, the test is usually performed after a baby is two weeks of age. The test is usually done between 2 and 4 weeks of age for babies who have a positive newborn screen.

Once a sweat test is abnormal and demonstrates a high chloride level, it will remain positive.

Sweat test values do not vary when a person has a cold or other brief illness.

What do I need to do to get my child or myself ready for the sweat test?

There are no restrictions on activity or diet or special preparations required before this test. However, it is important to ensure that the child is well hydrated. Babies should be fed their usual amount and at their usual times.

Please do not apply creams, lotions, or powders to the skin for at least 24 hours prior to the test.

All regular medications may be continued as they will have no effect on the test results.

Bring a sweater, jacket, or blanket to keep your child warm and help him or her to sweat during the test.

Where is the test performed?

The sweat test will be performed at the Pulmonary Function Laboratory located on the 6th Floor of 1526 N. Edgemont Street, Los Angeles, CA 90027. Parking is located at 1549 N. Edgemont Street.

How can I understand the sweat test result?

For infants up to and including 6 months of age:

- Equal to or less than 29 mEq/L = CF is very unlikely
- 30 - 59 mEq/L = intermediate means that CF is possible
- Greater than or equal to 60 mEq/L = CF is likely to be diagnosed

For people older than 6 months of age:

- Equal to or less than 39 mEq/L = CF is very unlikely
- 40 - 59 mEq/L = intermediate means that CF is possible
- Greater than or equal to 60 mEq/L = CF is likely to be diagnosed

Can the test results be uncertain?

In a small number of cases, the sweat chloride test results fall into an intermediate range which leaves the diagnosis of CF somewhat uncertain. When this happens, your treating physician will determine when and if the sweat test will need to be repeated.

When and how will I know the results of the sweat test?

The sweat test result is usually sent to the referring physician 2-5 business days after the test is performed.