

Your child's diagnostic fast

**Information from the Department of
Inherited Metabolic Disease**

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Why does my child need a diagnostic fast?

A diagnostic fast looks at how the body responds during a period of fasting (not eating).

Your doctor has decided that your child needs to have a diagnostic fast. This may be to understand better what is happening when their blood sugar falls and make a diagnosis. A diagnostic fast can tell us how long your child can safely fast for when well, before being at risk of hypoglycaemia (low blood glucose).

Your team will explain the reasons for the diagnostic fast to you. If you are not sure, please ask.

What happens during a diagnostic fast?

Your child will have a cannula (small tube into the vein) inserted into the back of their hand, foot or arm. This will allow blood samples to be taken easily.

During the fast, your child cannot have anything to eat but they can drink water. They will have blood samples taken every hour. These samples will be sent to the laboratory for analysis.

Your child may become upset that they cannot eat or drink (other than water). There are toys and activities on the day case unit that you and your child can use to distract from the fast. Your child must remain on the unit at all times while fasting.

Does my child need to fast before we come into the hospital?

No, your child can eat and drink normally on the day of admission. When you see your medical team on the ward they will let you know when your child will need to fast from.

How long will my child have to fast for?

The length of time your child will need to fast will depend on their age and why they need to have the fast.

Many of the fasts start overnight when children would not normally eat. Blood samples are usually taken from the early morning. The start and end time of the fast will be decided by the medical team when you arrive at the hospital.

What are the risks of the fast?

Your child will fast until the level of glucose in their blood is at a certain level. This is usually the point just before hypoglycaemia takes place. There is a risk that your child's blood glucose will go lower than the level we wish to stop at.

To reduce the risk of hypoglycaemia, your child will be closely monitored in a safe environment by specialist nurses. Each time the blood samples are taken the blood glucose will be checked at the bedside.

What happens if my child becomes hypoglycaemic during the fast?

If your child has hypoglycaemia, your nurse specialist will take the final blood samples for analysis. They will stop the fast and give your child a sugary drink immediately and something to eat. Your child may be given intravenous glucose through their cannula to bring the glucose levels in their blood back to normal. They will then be monitored closely for recovery. The final blood samples are essential for a successful fast.

When will the fast end and what happens next?

The fast will end at the planned time, no later than 4pm. It will finish earlier if your child shows any signs of hypoglycaemia, other symptoms, or if the cannula is not able to provide enough blood for testing.

At the end of the fast your specialist nurse will ensure that your child is back to their usual self and that blood glucose levels are stable.

Your child will need to be eating and drinking normally before they can go home. They must have eaten a meal and had a drink while on the unit. Your child will also need to provide a final urine sample before going home.

Do we have to make any changes after the fast?

If any changes need to be made to your child's treatment or diet, we will let you know before you leave the hospital.

What should I do if my child is ill or becomes hypoglycaemic after the fast?

The signs of hypoglycaemia can include vomiting, irritability, sweating, looking unusually pale or a change of mood or behaviour. Use your emergency regimen as normal (if you have one) and attend your local Emergency Department (A&E) if you are concerned. Please call the team for advice at any time. Our contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

What is the expected recovery time after the diagnostic fast?

Your child may be more tired than usual in the evening of the fast. They should be able to carry out their normal activities the next day. This includes going to school or nursery.

When will I get the results?

Your specialist team will review your child's blood results and contact you by telephone or letter. You will be seen in our outpatient department, usually 3-4 months after the diagnostic fast to discuss the results.

Contact details

Contact the Inherited Metabolic Diseases Department at Evelina London Children's Hospital if you have any concerns about your child or if you have any queries.

These telephone numbers are open Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm:

- consultants, **t:** 020 7188 0848
- clinical nurse specialists, **t:** 020 7188 0855
- dietitians, **t:** 020 7188 4008

Out of hours, please call the hospital switchboard, **t:** 020 7188 7188 and ask to speak to the on-call specialities registrar covering metabolic diseases.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit, **w:** www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets

Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

t: 020 7188 3003 10am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

e: letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:**

complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111 **w:** 111.nhs.uk

NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing. **w:** www.nhs.uk

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