

# SCHILLING TEST

Your doctor would like you to have a Schilling Test.  
This leaflet will answer some of the questions you may have.

## What is a Schilling Test?

Vitamin B12 is needed by your body to make red blood cells. Most people have plenty of vitamin B12 in their diet. However, sometimes the body is unable to absorb this vitamin from the food. A 'Schilling test' measures how well your body absorbs vitamin B12.

You might have heard your doctor mention a 'DICOPAC test'. This is just another name for a Schilling test. Schilling is pronounced "shilling" - the test was invented in 1953 by a person called Schilling.

## What is involved?

When you come for your test, you will be given two tablets to swallow. You also have a small injection. Then you can go home but you will need to collect all your urine for the next 24 hours. We will give you a container for you to collect your urine in.

After collecting all your urine for 24 hours, you need to return the collection bottle to us. We then measure how much vitamin B12 is in the urine.

The two tablets that we give you contain vitamin B12 tagged with a small amount of radioactive dye. The radioactivity will disappear by itself soon after the test is finished.

## Do I need to prepare for the test?

Yes, you must follow these instructions:

1. Do not eat or drink anything for 12 hours before your appointment.  
(If you are a diabetic, you may have a light breakfast consisting of one slice of dry toast or dry bread and a drink of water. Do not have cereal, dairy products or any other food which could contain vitamin B12 - this would upset the test. Insulin and/or tablets may be taken.)
2. Please bring a shopping bag to collect a bottle from us for your 24-hour urine collection.
3. Ordinary diet may be resumed 2 hours after the start of the test.

## If I am taking tablets or other drugs, do I need to stop taking them?

Vitamin B12 can interfere with the test. If you have taken vitamin B12, either by injection or as tablets, then you need to wait at least 3 days before having a Schilling Test.

Vitamin B12 medication is sometime called 'Hydroxocobalamin' or 'Cyanocobalamin'.

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### **Will it hurt?**

Only the 'pinprick' of the injection needle may hurt a bit. You may have had other injections in the past. This is much the same.

### **Is the radiation dangerous?**

The radioactivity will disappear by itself soon after the test is finished (nearly all of it disappears within one week, any remaining traces will disappear within three months or earlier). The amount of radiation is smaller than that from most x-ray examinations.

### **Do I need to do anything after the test?**

Please remember to collect all your urine for 24 hours from the start of the test. Then return the bottle to us. Make sure the bottle top is properly screwed down!

If you are travelling abroad in the three months after your scan, please ask us for further advice. Ports and airports have very sensitive radiation detectors which may pick up tiny amounts of radioactivity remaining after your test. We will give you a letter that you can show to customs officials at ports or airports.

### **What happens to the results of the test?**

We measure how much vitamin B-12 is in your urine. We check the results. Then we send the results to the doctor who asked us to do the test. It takes about a week.

### **Is there anything I should tell the staff before the test?**

Yes:

1. If you are pregnant, or think you may be pregnant, please 'phone us to let us know.
2. Please telephone us if you are breast-feeding.
3. Tartrazine is used as a colouring agent in one of the tablets. Please let us know if you are allergic to tartrazine.

### **Any more questions?**

The staff of the department want your visit to be as pleasant as possible. If you have any questions, please ask the staff in the nuclear medicine department. You can telephone, or ask before the test starts.

**Our telephone number is  
Southend (01702) 385142**