

# Testing for Primary aldosteronism

If you have been diagnosed with high blood pressure and you would like to find out if primary aldosteronism is the cause, you will need to do some tests. This is particularly important if your high blood pressure is hard to control.

These tests include:



## Note:

It is important to get tested.

If you have primary aldosteronism you may need surgery or medication. This will depend on the type of primary aldosteronism you have.

## Screening blood test

### What is a screening blood test?



- Your doctor will need to check how much aldosterone and renin you have in your body.
- Aldosterone helps to control the level of salt in your body. This helps to keep your blood pressure normal.
- A small amount of your blood will be taken and tested.
- High aldosterone levels mean the screening blood test is positive.

### What happens if my screening blood test is positive?

If your screening blood test is positive, you **may have** primary aldosteronism. This may be the reason for your high blood pressure. Your doctor will need to arrange a saline infusion test to make sure.

### What happens if my screening blood test is negative?

Your doctor may ask to do the test again, just to be sure.

If it is negative again, your doctor will treat you with standard medications to lower your blood pressure.

# Saline (saltwater) infusion test

## What is a saline infusion test?



- Your body should make less aldosterone when you have extra salt.
- The test puts extra salt in your body through a drip in your arm.
- This test checks how much aldosterone your body is making while it has the extra salt.
- You have primary aldosteronism if this test shows that your body is still making too much aldosterone.
- This test is usually done in a hospital or clinic.

## How long will this test take?

- This test is done over 4 hours.
- You will be seated but you can get up to go to the bathroom when you need to.
- Bring something to do to keep you busy while you are seated, or have a rest.
- You may not feel well after the test. Consider having someone drive you home and stay with you for the day.

## What will it tell my doctors?

- You have primary aldosteronism if this test shows that your body is still making too much aldosterone.

## What happens next?

- If you have primary aldosteronism your doctors may ask you to have a CT scan and adrenal vein sampling.
- These tests will tell your doctors if one or both adrenal glands are affected by primary aldosteronism.

# CT scan of the adrenal glands

## Why am I having this test?

To work out what type of primary aldosteronism you have, if you are interested in having surgery to treat the condition, it can help your doctor to find out if a small, non-cancerous tumour in your adrenal gland is causing primary aldosteronism.

## How is the test done?

- This test is done in a hospital.
- This is a type of X-ray scan that looks at the size and shape of your adrenal glands.
- You will need an iodine injection to make the scans clearer.
- This scan takes about 30 minutes.

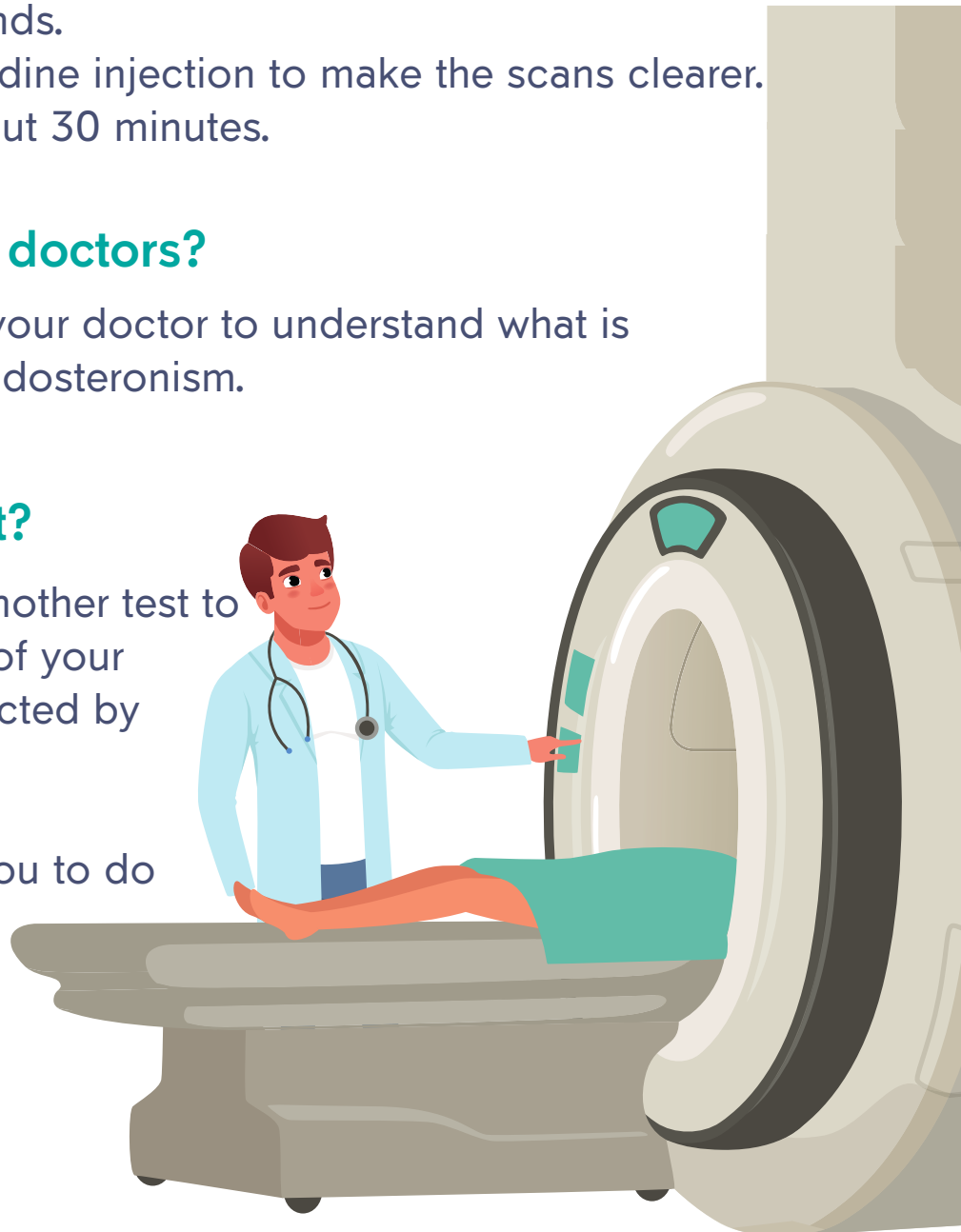
## What will it tell my doctors?

The CT scan can help your doctor to understand what is causing your primary aldosteronism.

## What happens next?

You may need to do another test to confirm if one or both of your adrenal glands are affected by primary aldosteronism.

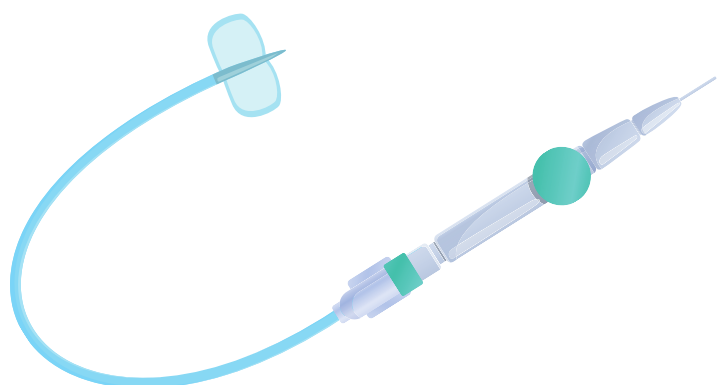
Your doctor may ask you to do adrenal vein sampling.



# Adrenal vein sampling

## Why am I having this test?

- This test also helps work out the type of primary aldosteronism you have.
- This test takes blood samples from around your adrenal glands.



## How is the test done?

- This test is done in a hospital.
- The blood samples are taken using a small needle inserted in your groin.
- This test takes 1 – 3 hours.
- After the test, you will need to rest for 2 to 4 hours.

## What will it tell my doctors?

This test helps your doctors to work out if aldosterone is coming from one or both adrenal glands.

## What happens next?

After looking at all your results your doctors can help you to decide on the best treatment.

Many people can simply have changes made to their high blood pressure tablets.

If only one gland is affected, you may need to have surgery to remove the gland.

More information about primary aldosteronism is available at the PA Foundation [www.primaryaldosteronism.org/](http://www.primaryaldosteronism.org/). Information for both doctors and patients can be found at <https://www.hudson.org.au/disease/hormones-disorders/endocrine-hypertension/>

Plain language resource created by enliven Victoria