

Dehydroepiandrosterone and Dehydroepiandrosterone Sulfate



Does this test have other names?

DHEA, DHEA-S

What is this test?

This test measures the level of dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) and dehydroepiandrosterone sulfate (DHEA-S) in your blood. It may also be used to check how well your adrenal glands are working.

DHEA is a hormone made by your adrenal glands. Some DHEA is also made by the ovaries and testes. DHEA is changed into DHEA-S in your adrenal glands and liver. DHEA levels may be lower during different times of the day. But DHEA-S levels don't change through the day.

In both men and women, the sex hormones estrogen and testosterone depend on DHEA. DHEA also has a role in the making of insulin growth factor-1 (IGF-1). IGF-1 helps with muscle growth and insulin sensitivity.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if you have symptoms of either high or low levels of DHEA-S. Men may not have any symptoms of high levels of DHEA-S. Symptoms in women include:

- Acne
- Deep voice
- A lot of hair growth on the face and body (hirsutism)
- Female pattern baldness
- Increased muscle mass
- Missed periods
- Sterility

High levels of DHEA-S in boys can cause early puberty. In girls it can cause enlargement of the external genitals and abnormal periods.

Low levels of DHEA-S may be linked to these conditions:

- Diabetes
- Osteoporosis
- Dementia
- Erectile dysfunction
- Thinning and dryness of the vaginal tissues (vaginal atrophy)
- Reduced interest in sex

You may also have a low DHEA-S level if you have any of these:

- Lupus

- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Crohn's disease
- AIDS

What other tests might I have along with this test?

You may have a blood test to check your androstenedione (AD) level if your healthcare provider thinks that you are making too much DHEA and DHEA-S. AD is a molecule made from DHEA before it turns into a sex hormone.

You may also have tests to check your levels of estrogen, testosterone, and other sex hormones.

You may have an adrenocorticotrophic hormone test. This may be done if your healthcare provider thinks that you are not making enough DHEA and DHEA-S.

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

Normal levels vary with age and sex. If you have a normal level, it means your adrenal glands are working the way they should.

If your level of DHEA-S is high, it means that your body is making too much of the hormones. This excess may be related to adrenal cancer, tumors, or excess growth of adrenal hormone-producing tissue (hyperplasia).

If your DHEA level is low, it may mean that your adrenal glands are not making enough hormones. This can be because of damage to the adrenal gland or a diseased pituitary gland. The pituitary gland makes a hormone that stimulates the adrenal glands to do their job. If the pituitary gland doesn't make enough of its hormone, then the adrenal glands won't make enough of their hormone. Your adrenal glands may stop working for a short time if you start or stop taking certain medicines, such as prednisone.

How is this test done?

The test is done with a blood sample. A needle is used to draw blood from a vein in your arm or hand.

Does this test pose any risks?

Having a blood test with a needle has some risks. These include bleeding, infection, bruising, and feeling lightheaded. When the needle pricks your arm or hand, you may feel a slight sting or pain. Afterward, the site may be sore.

What might affect my test results?

Menstruation can affect your results. You should have this test done 1 week before or after your menstrual period.

DHEA supplements can also affect your results. Nutritional supplements aren't kept track of in the U.S. Because of this, the purity and strength listed on the supplement package may be unreliable. DHEA supplements are not advised because they have many side effects.

How do I get ready for this test?

Tell your healthcare provider if you are taking a DHEA supplement. Tell them if you take any supplement that is said to increase athletic performance. Tell your healthcare provider about all other medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

© 2000-2027 The StayWell Company, LLC. All rights reserved. This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your healthcare professional's instructions
This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical care. Always follow your Healthcare professional's instructions. Copyright Krames LLC.