

## CUSHINGS SYNDROME – INSTRUCTIONS & EDUCATION

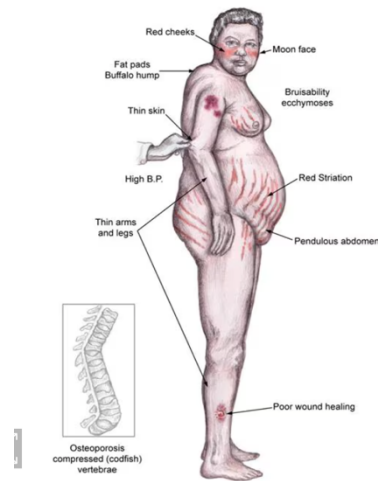
### EVALUATING FOR CUSHINGS SYNDROME:

#### CAUSES OF CUSHINGS SYNDROME:

Cushing's Syndrome refers to high cortisol in the blood. There are many causes, the most common is a tumor in the pituitary gland that is a small pea-sized structure that is situated deep in the middle of your brain. See the [Education page](#) on my website. The pituitary gland secretes many hormones, such as FSH and LH, which are involved in your menstrual cycle. It also secretes a hormone called ACTH (adrenocorticotropic hormone), which goes through the blood and stimulates the adrenal glands to make cortisol. The adrenal glands also make the androgens we test for noted in the **NaPro Evaluation - First Visit handout** to look for [Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome](#) (PCOS). Cushing's Syndrome can easily be mistaken for PCOS and/or [metabolic syndrome](#).

#### SYMPTOMS:

- rapid weight gain
- easy bruising
- red facies (plethora)
- round face
- menstrual changes
- hypertension
- depression
- dorsal fat pad
- high insulin levels
- striae (purple stretch marks on the abdomen, breasts, arms)
- edema (swelling usually in the ankles)
- muscle weakness



Physical findings in Cushing syndrome.

Image ref: <https://emedicine.medscape.com/article/117365-overview>

#### DIAGNOSTIC SCREENING: LABS:

- a [cholesterol panel](#) will be drawn, which should be FASTING
- two screening tests are required to be done when we are looking for Cushing's Syndrome:
  - a) salivary cortisol test-2 samples (or 3 samples)**
    - take your lab requisition slip to lab and pick up the salivary kit.
    - right before you go to bed (11:00 PM is best), swab for saliva, following directions in the kit.
    - follow the directions in the kit to store the saliva specimen in the refrigerator.
    - repeat the salivary test the 2<sup>nd</sup> night (and the 3<sup>rd</sup> night, if a 3, sample test was ordered).
    - after you complete the required # of salivary tests, next morning take the kit to the lab.
  - b) dexamethasone suppression test.**
    - after you perform the evening salivary swab test for the last time, take dexamethasone 1000 mg, one tablet one time, then go directly to bed.
    - go the lab the next day, prior to 8:00 AM, and have the fasting cortisol blood test drawn.
    - this lab should be FASTING.

#### MORE INFORMATION:

- more info about Cushing's Syndrome can be found here:  
<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/endocrine-diseases/cushings-syndrome#treatment>