

# UNDERSTANDING THE 'NT-proBNP' BLOOD TEST: WHY SHOULD I GET TESTED IF I HAVE SCLERODERMA?

From 1 November 2023, the Government is funding an important blood test called the 'NT-proBNP' test for Australians living with Scleroderma, also known as systemic sclerosis (SSc).<sup>1</sup> The test assesses your risk of having a condition called Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension (PAH), which is more common in people with Scleroderma.<sup>2</sup> Read the information below or chat to your doctor to learn more.

## What is the NT-proBNP test?



NT-proBNP (N-terminal pro-B-type natriuretic peptide) is a chemical produced by the body and released into the bloodstream in response to changes in pressure inside the heart. The NT-proBNP test is a simple blood test which measures NT-proBNP levels. Results of the test can help your doctor assess your risk of having a condition called Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension (PAH).

## What is Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension (PAH)?<sup>3</sup>



PAH is a serious and progressive condition caused by the narrowing of arteries that carry blood from the heart to the lungs making it harder for the heart to work. Symptoms of PAH include feeling short of breath, chest pain, and fainting. Over time if PAH is not treated the symptoms can get worse and may lead to heart failure and in some cases death. PAH can be detected by doing a combination of breathing tests (lung function tests) and a NT-proBNP blood test.<sup>4</sup>

## Why should I get regular NT-proBNP blood tests if I have Scleroderma?



People living with Scleroderma have an increased risk of PAH – about 1 in 10 will develop PAH in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Experts recommend people with Scleroderma should get tested for PAH every year.<sup>5</sup> Detecting PAH early means you have more treatment options and early treatment can help keep your PAH well managed for many years. In Australia, multiple medications are funded by the government to help treat PAH.

## How do I get the NT-proBNP test?



During your next check-up, talk to your doctor about getting a NT-proBNP test for detecting PAH. They will need to order the test for you. The Australian Government will pay for people with Scleroderma to have up to two (2) NT-proBNP tests every 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

## How often should I be tested?



It is recommended that people with Scleroderma have a NT-proBNP test once every year. This test will be performed alongside a lung function test to assess your potential risk of having PAH.

## What happens if my NT-proBNP is high?



If your NT-proBNP levels are higher than normal you might be considered 'at risk' and your doctor will refer you for additional tests. This may include echocardiography (TTE) which is an ultrasound of the heart.

**Book in a check-up today with your treating doctor and bring this factsheet to discuss NT-proBNP testing**

For more information and resources on Scleroderma, scan here to visit the Scleroderma Australia website



Abbreviations: NT-proBNP serum N-terminal pro-B-type natriuretic peptide; TTE: transthoracic echocardiography. References: 1. Australian Government, Department of Health. Medicare Benefits Schedule, available at [www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/factsheet-current](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/factsheet-current) 2. Weatherald J *et al. Eur Respir Rev* 2019;28:190023. 3. Lung Foundation Australia. Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension Fact Sheet, available at <https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/pah-fact-sheet> 4. Australian Scleroderma Interest Group. Screening for PAH, available at <https://asigresearch.com.au/screening-for-pah/> 5. Humbert M *et al. Eur Heart J* 2022;43:3618-3731. Janssen-Cilag Pty Ltd, ABN 47 000 129 975, 1-5 Khartoum Road, Macquarie Park NSW 2113. Ph: 1800 226 334. CP-412223 EMVPAH0074 Date of preparation: October 2023.