

Salivary Cortisol Testing

At-Home Instructions

Before you begin: you'll receive 4 tests from our office. Pick an average day — nothing with unusually high stress or heavy exercise — and make sure you've had a full night's rest the night before.

How to test: download the Eli app — it will walk you through each 20-minute test and save your results automatically.

Your Testing Schedule

Cortisol naturally peaks in the morning and falls throughout the day. Your 4 samples map that daily curve:

When	Sample	What It Shows
+30 min	Test 1	30 minutes after waking. Cortisol should rise 50–60% above your waking value — this is the peak of the CAR.
~12:00 PM	Test 2	Midday. Reflects the decline as cortisol drops through the morning.
~4:00–5:00 PM	Test 3	Afternoon. Continued decline — helps spot an abnormal afternoon rise or an insufficient drop.
~10:00–11:00 PM	Test 4	Bedtime. Should be your lowest point of the day. An elevated bedtime reading is one of the more common signs of a stressed daily rhythm (HPA-axis dysregulation).

Practical Notes

- Timing precision matters — collect samples at consistent clock times, since cortisol shifts quickly in the morning window especially.
- No eating, drinking (except water), teeth brushing, or vigorous exercise for at least 30–60 minutes before each sample — these can cause false elevations.
- Some protocols use only 4 fixed points (waking, midday, afternoon, bedtime) and skip the +30 min sample if the focus is the overall daily slope rather than the awakening response specifically — follow the schedule your care team gave you.
- If you are menstruating, try to test during the same phase of your cycle for the most comparable results, since cortisol can be influenced by hormonal fluctuations.