

Neurophysiology department

# Your electroencephalogram (EEG) test

## Information for patients, relatives, and carers

This leaflet explains what an electroencephalogram (EEG) test is and how to prepare for it. We hope it answers any questions that you or those who care for you may have. This leaflet does not replace the discussion between you and your care team but aims to help you understand more about what is discussed. If there is anything that you do not understand please ask your care team.

### What is an electroencephalogram (EEG)?

An EEG is a painless test that records the electrical activity in the brain. The test provides useful information that will help your doctor to diagnose and manage your complaint or condition. An EEG is the most useful tool for diagnosing people with suspected epilepsy.

The EEG can also assess the brain function in other neurological conditions including meningitis, encephalitis, toxic and metabolic encephalopathies, and dementia.

### Preparing for the test

- Please ensure your hair is clean and dry. Do not use any hair products such as gel or hairspray and remove any hair extensions/weave/wig
- Please wear loose clothing for the test as we may need to place extra electrodes on your body
- Continue to take your medication unless told otherwise by your doctor
- Please eat and drink as normal
- Please bring a list of any medication you are taking with you
- You may wish to bring a brush or comb to tidy your hair after the test

**Please arrive on time for your appointment. If you are running late, please call us on the appropriate number listed on page 3, otherwise we may have to cancel or reschedule your test.**

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## The test

- The physiologist (the doctor who will do the test) will explain the test and ask for your verbal consent
- The test will be filmed in the event that you have a seizure or one of your episodes. This will be explained to you and we will ask for your consent to film
- We will discuss your full medical history and ask to see your list of current medication
- The physiologist will take measurements of your head, then, after gently rubbing over the marks, attach electrodes (small metal discs) using a sticky paste
- You will lie or sit and will need to relax during this time. The physiologist will ask you to follow instructions, such as asking you to open or close your eyes
- Depending on your medical history, we may ask you to do a deep breathing exercise (hyperventilation) for about three minutes. You may feel light-headed and/or a tingling feeling in your lips or fingers – don't worry as this is normal and will pass when you return to breathing normally
- We may offer you a flashing light exercise to help us look at how your brain reacts to bright flashing lights. This is an important part of the test for people who may have seizures or blackouts caused by flashing lights when their eyes are open or closed. Very rarely, hyperventilation or flashing lights can cause a seizure. If this happens during the test, the exercise will be stopped immediately
- A routine EEG test lasts about one hour. If you're having a prolonged EEG this will take between one-and-a-half and two hours

## After the test

After the test, we will remove the discs from your head and clean your hair to remove the paste. Any excess paste can be removed by shampooing your hair at home.

A doctor will check you afterwards to make sure you are well enough to go home. You will be able to return home, to work or school straight after the test.

The results of the investigation will be analysed and a full report will be sent to your referring consultant within one week. The results will not be available to you on the day.

You should have a follow-up appointment with your referring consultant. If one is not arranged for you then please contact them to arrange this.

## Risk or complications following the test

There are no common side effects. This test is not dangerous for pregnant women or their unborn babies.

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## Contact details

If you cannot make your test or have any questions or concerns about your appointment please contact the relevant neurophysiology department:

- St Marys Hospital: **020 3312 6628**
- Charing Cross Hospital: **020 3311 1329 / 7515**

We are open Monday–Friday, 09.00–17.00.

## How do I comment on my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte’s & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary’s and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary’s Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or alternative languages. Please email the communications team: [imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)