

Neurophysiology department

Your somatosensory evoked potential test (SSEP)

Information for patients, relatives, and carers

This leaflet explains what a somatosensory evoked potential test (SSEP) 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 a somatosensory evoked potential test (SSEP)?

A SSEP test investigates the function of a nerve pathway between a limb (arm/leg) and the brain through the spinal cord. It does this by stimulating a hand or foot using electrical impulses and recording responses from the nerves. The test can feel slightly uncomfortable but should not feel painful.

Preparing for the test

- Please tell the department if you have a pacemaker or any other implanted devices as this may interfere with the recording. Please bring information about your device with you to your appointment
- Continue to take your medication as normal
- You can eat and drink as normal
- Please bring a list of your current medication with you to the appointment
- Please wash your hair before the test and do not use any hair products such as gel or hairspray
- Please remove any hair extensions/weave/wig before the SSEP
- Please do not use any moisturiser or body lotions on your skin on the day of your test as this can interfere with the recording
- Please wear loose clothing for the test e.g. trousers and a top which can roll-up. If the clothing is not appropriate we may ask you to remove parts of it or to wear a hospital gown
- You may wish to bring a brush or comb with you 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.

During the test

- When you arrive at your appointment you will be called in by the clinical physiologist who will explain the test and ask you to sign a consent form
- they will ask about your medical history and to see the list of your current medication
- The clinical physiologist will use a crayon to make a few markings on your head and body. The area will be rubbed with an abrasive gel which can feel like a small scratch
- Electrodes (small metal discs) will be attached to your head and arms/legs using a sticky paste. The paste can leave your hair feeling sticky but this will come off very easily when you shampoo your hair
- We will ask you to either lie comfortably on a bed or sit in a chair
- It is important to relax during the procedure
- The physiologist will stimulate the nerves in the arms or legs with small electric impulses and record the responses. You will feel a tapping sensation while the nerve is tested. This can be a little uncomfortable at first but most people get used to it and find it painless
- When the test is completed, the physiologist will remove the electrodes and gently clean the area. Any paste residue can be removed by shampooing your hair at home
- The results will be analysed and a report will be sent to your referring consultant. This usually takes up to two weeks
- The SSEP test lasts about one hour

Risk or complications following the test

There are no known side effects of SSEP. Occasionally, patients cannot tolerate the electrical impulses. If this happens we will tell your referring clinician.

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 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

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

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk