



If you have any English language difficulties, please ask staff to book an interpreter.

From home contact the Telephone Interpreter Service on 9605 3056.

Services are provided free of charge. Ask staff if this information is available in your preferred language.

What is EEG and why has my doctor requested this investigation?

An EEG (electro-encephalography) is a non-invasive method of recording brain wave activity. The EEG study records normal brain waves and can detect particular changes in brain waves which may be seen in patients with epilepsy or other neurological diseases. An EEG test cannot “rule out” epilepsy or seizures but may help to diagnose them. EEG is a commonly used diagnostic test for the evaluation of patients with a suspected seizure or with known epilepsy. EEG may also be used as part of the evaluation of other neurological diseases or when someone has a “blackout” and the cause is unknown.

What is involved in having an EEG?

Having an EEG is painless. When an EEG is performed, special recording discs, called electrodes, are pasted on to your head, temporarily, and attached to a recording device which is attached to a computer. The recording device does not stimulate the brain. An EEG usually takes 45 minutes with time needed to attach and remove the electrodes. The actual EEG recording usually lasts for 20 minutes. A video will be recorded at the same time so that if something occurs during the recording the neurologist who reports the EEG can see what happens.

What if my child needs an EEG?

The procedure is the same for a child. For young children they may sit in your lap during the study, whilst older children can sit on their own. You can remain in the rooms with your child whilst the study is performed.

What might occur when I have an EEG?

During an EEG certain techniques may be used to increase the chance of detecting abnormal brain activity. These techniques include hyperventilation (deep breathing), photic (light) stimulation and sleep deprivation.

- During hyperventilation you will be asked to breathe deeply and rapidly for 3 minutes. This may make you feel lightheaded or dizzy. Hyperventilation is not routinely performed in patients who are pregnant, or have significant health problems such as heart or lung disease so please let the EEG staff know if you have any concerns.
- Photic stimulation involves using a very bright light, placed in front of your eyes, which intermittently flashes. This may be uncomfortable so if you are concerned about this please let the EEG scientist know.
- A sleep deprived EEG is performed to increase the chance you will sleep during the study. For adults you will be asked to wake at midnight the night before the study. You will then need to remain awake for the rest of the night before coming in to hospital for the study. You will need to be brought in by a friend or family member and should return home immediately after the study to go to bed. Children will be asked to stay awake for a shorter period of time depending on their age and the chance they will sleep during the study. The EEG staff or your doctor will give you advice about this. We do not use sedation to help people sleep for an EEG.

What do I need to do prior to an EEG? Do I need to bring anything?

There is usually no specific preparation required prior to a study. It is beneficial if you have clean dry hair on the day with no products such as gel or hair spray in your hair. Nothing needs to be brought to the appointment other than your referral and your Medicare card.

If I have any questions who should I contact?

Please contact the staff at the Neuro-Diagnostics Unit on 9895 4639 (office hours: Mon- Fri, 8.30am to 4.30pm).



Protecting Your Privacy

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