

Patient information factsheet

Evoked potentials (EPs)

An evoked potential is a procedure used to determine how well the nerves in the brain and spinal cord are working. It can involve one or more of a series of small tests, depending on what your doctor has requested.

You have been sent an appointment for your test and we have provided the following information so you know how to prepare and what to expect.

Before attending your appointment

Please make sure you:

- continue to take your regular medication
- eat and drink as normal
- arrive with your hair freshly washed and dried and free from hairspray, mousse or gel to ensure the electrodes stick to your scalp
- wear loose fitting clothing
- bring your glasses with you, if you wear them

Please ensure you arrive on time and allow at least one and a half hours for the procedure. If you arrive late it may be necessary to rebook your appointment.

During the procedure

Your head will first be measured and sites marked with a wax crayon. A cream will then be applied to the scalp with a cotton bud.

Responses are recorded from the brain by placing several small electrodes onto your scalp using a sticky paste. The paste is washed away by the person performing the test (physiologist) at the end of the procedure. You may wish to bring a comb or hairbrush with you.

The most commonly performed evoked potentials involve stimulating the visual and hearing pathways, as well as a nerve in the leg or arm.

In order to stimulate the visual system you will be required to watch a checkerboard television screen. To stimulate the hearing pathways you will be asked to listen to some clicks through headphones and to stimulate a nerve in the leg or arm a tiny electrical pulse is applied to the ankle or wrist.

No sensation or stimulation is felt from the discs that are placed onto the scalp. If you are required to have the tiny electrical stimulus this feels similar to sharp pins and needles.

There are no after effects.

After the procedure

The physiologist performing your test will not be able to give you your results immediately after it is completed as the results need to be analysed by one of our consultants. The consultant will then send a medical report to your doctor.

Further information

Please feel free to contact the department if there is any information you do not understand. If your appointment is not convenient please phone as soon as possible to rearrange it.

Clinical neurophysiology department

Telephone: 023 8120 6785 (between 8am and 4.30pm, or please leave a message on the answer machine).

Wessex Neurological Centre
B level
Southampton General Hospital
Tremona Road
Southampton
SO16 6YD

If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.