

## Patient information factsheet

# Visual electrodiagnostic tests

We have given you this factsheet because your doctor has referred you for visual electrodiagnostic tests. It explains what visual electrodiagnostic tests are, what the tests involve and how to prepare for your appointment. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

## What are visual electrodiagnostic tests?

Visual electrodiagnostic tests are special eye tests that can help your doctor find out what is causing problems with your eye(s).

These tests investigate the function and performance of the visual system. The visual system is made up of the:

- brain
- optic nerves (nerves which connect the eyes to the brain)
- retina (a light-sensitive layer of cells at the back of the eye that converts light into electrical signals)

There are different types of electrodiagnostic tests, including:

- a visual evoked potential (VEP) – a test which looks at the function of the optic nerves and brain
- an electroretinogram (ERG) – a test which looks at the function of the different parts of the retina

All electrodiagnostic tests are non-invasive. This means that the tests are painless and do not involve cutting your skin or entering your body in any way.

## Before the test

Electrodiagnostic tests are highly specialised tests and can only be performed at certain centres across the UK. University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust is one of the major centres for the whole of the south of England. Because of this, there is a long waiting list for these tests.

As soon as you receive your appointment letter, please contact the orthoptic department on **023 8120 4789** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm) to confirm if you are able to attend the date we have given you.

**If you are unable to attend the appointment date, it is important that you let us know as soon as possible.**

Please note that we may have sent you more than one appointment letter. Some people will have multiple appointments booked for the same day to see different eye specialists, such as the orthoptist or ophthalmologist. If this is the case for you, please make sure you read your appointment letters carefully so that you do not miss any of your appointments.

## On the day of the test

On the day of your test(s), you should:

- not wear eye makeup
- not use an excessive amount of moisturiser around your eyes
- bring your glasses and/or contact lenses with you (if you wear them)
- bring any of your usual medication (in its original packaging) that needs to be taken while you are at your appointment
- eat and drink something before your appointment (we also recommend bringing in some food and drink with you)

If you are coming to your appointment by car, please remember that our car parks can get very busy, so it's a good idea to allow plenty of time to find a space. You may wish to consider getting a lift or coming by public transport.

## Patient information factsheet

When you arrive at the hospital, please report to the orthoptic reception desk in the eye outpatients (as per the details included in your appointment letter).

### During the test

The electrodiagnostic tests will be performed by a healthcare professional called a clinical scientist.

For most of the electrodiagnostic tests, we will need to dilate your pupils with eye drops. If this is the case for you, we will discuss this with you at your appointment.

For each test, we will attach small discs to the back of your head and forehead with a little cream. We will also place threads on your lower eyelids and stickers on your temples.

In order to stimulate your visual system, we will ask you to watch some patterns on a television screen and/or flashing lights. The discs and threads will measure the small electrical responses that the retina, optic nerve and brain generate to light.

Please allow two hours for your appointment.

#### **If the appointment is for your child**

We have included some additional advice below as the information differs for children having visual electrodiagnostic tests.

- Please allow **one** hour for your child's appointment.
- We **do not** use eye drops in children.
- Your child can sit on your lap during the tests. We will ask them to watch some cartoons on a television as we attach small discs on their head (using a headband) and stickers on their cheeks.
- Your child is allowed to eat and drink during the tests (babies can also be breastfed).

## After the test

After your test(s), we will wash away the cream and remove the discs and sensors from your face and head (you may also wish to wash your hair when you return home). You will then be able to leave hospital and resume your normal daily activities.

If we have used eye drops to dilate your pupils, you should not drive after the test. Your vision will be blurry for four to six hours, so please arrange for someone to collect you and take you home after your appointment.

## Results

After your test(s), we will review your results and send a report to the doctor who referred you (usually within 48 hours). Your doctor will then contact you to discuss your results.

## Are there any risks or side effects?

Electrodiagnostic tests are harmless and do not cause any side effects.

## Are there any alternatives?

There are no alternative methods for assessing the function of the visual system.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Orthoptics

Telephone: **023 8120 4789** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm)

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **[www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport)**