

What is a sleep-deprived EEG?

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What is a sleep deprived electroencephalogram (EEG) and why is it done?

EEG stands for electroencephalogram. It is the recording of the “brainwaves” – the electrical activity of the brain. Patients are referred for an EEG for a variety of reasons including fits, faints and blackouts and the results may assist the referring doctor in the diagnosis and treatment of your condition.

Before the EEG

- Please ensure that your hair is clean. Do not use any hair products (gel, hair spray etc.).
- Please have meals as normal.
- Take your medication as normal unless otherwise directed by your doctor.
- **It is important that you try to have as little sleep as possible the night before the test – a maximum of 4 hours sleep is advised.**

Having the EEG

The test takes about 90 minutes. The Clinical Physiologist will make measurements of your head, then after gently rubbing over the marks, attach approximately 23 electrodes (small metal discs) using a sticky paste. The test itself is painless and the recording takes approximately 60 minutes. You will be lying down during the recording and the physiologist will ask you to open and close your eyes at various times.

What other measurements are made?

Some of the following may be needed during your test:

- Deep-breathing. This may produce changes in your brain activity that could help in diagnosis. You will be asked to take deep breaths for about 3 minutes. This may cause you to feel light-headed or experience tingling in the fingers – this is a normal response.

- **Photic stimulation.** This is an important part of the test for people who may have seizures or blackouts caused by flashing lights. You will be asked to look at a bright flashing light with your eyes open and closed.

What are the side-effects of the test?

There are no side effects of the test at all. We cannot read your mind or thoughts or any emotions you may feel. No electricity or needles are used – we only record signals produced naturally. This is an investigation NOT a treatment.

Should you have a seizure during the EEG you will be checked to make sure you are well enough to go home. It is very unlikely that the investigation will cause an epileptic seizure.


There is no danger to pregnant ladies or their unborn babies from this test.

It is not advisable for you to drive yourself home after a Sleep Deprived EEG as you will still be very tired. Please bring someone with you to take you home.

What happens after the test?

The results of the investigation need to be analyzed by a Consultant Neurophysiologist. A full report will then be sent to the doctor who referred you for the test. The results will not be available to you on the same day.

If after reading this leaflet you have any questions about the test, please do not hesitate to contact the Neurophysiology Department and you will be able to speak to a Clinical Physiologist



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