

# What is an Ambulatory EEG?

Information and advice for patients

## *Neurophysiology*

### **What is an ambulatory EEG?**

An ambulatory EEG is a recording of the electrical activity of the brain over 24 hours or more. EEG stands for electroencephalogram. You should have already had an EEG before having an ambulatory EEG.

An ambulatory EEG involves having small discs (electrodes) attached to your scalp using paste, which are then attached by wires to a recording box that you carry with you. You will be able to go home after the discs, wires and recording box have been set up and continue with your normal activities. As part of the test you will need to keep a diary, and press a button on the recording box when you have any symptoms/events.

The duration of the test will depend on how frequently you have symptoms. You will need to come to the hospital at least twice and up to 4 times; your appointment letter will tell you how many times you need to come.

### **What are the benefits of an ambulatory EEG?**

The benefit of an ambulatory EEG is that it can record your symptoms and will help your doctor to diagnose if there are any problems and he/she will then be able to advise any appropriate treatment if required.

### **What are the risks of an ambulatory EEG?**

There is a small chance that you may experience some reddening of the skin or soreness where the paste is applied.

If care isn't taken with the equipment, there is a small risk that the cable of wires could become wrapped around the throat during sleep so to avoid this the cable should be stuck to your back at night to shorten it.

### **Are there any alternative tests?**

There is usually no alternative to this test that will give your doctor the information they need.

### **What are the risks of not having the test?**

If you choose not to have an ambulatory EEG, this may delay your doctor finding out what is causing your symptoms and starting treatment, or your condition may be misdiagnosed and not given the appropriate treatment.

### **Preparing for the test**

- Wear a shirt/blouse that opens at the front.
- Arrive with clean, dry hair free from grease, hair spray and lacquers etc.

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- If you have long hair bring a bobble with you to tie it back during the test.
- Continue to take any medicines as usual and bring a list of these with you to the appointment.
- Bring a comb or brush with you to tidy your hair after the test.

If you are unaware when you have your symptoms you will need to have someone with you, who is able to press the event button and complete the diary.

If you are unable to keep this appointment please contact us on 0121 507 4319 so that alternative arrangements can be made and the appointment can be given to another patient waiting for the test. You should also contact us if your symptoms/events have become less frequent.

Before the test we will ask you if you have read and understood this information and whether you consent to go ahead with it. We will also answer any questions you have.

## **During the test**

### **Your first appointment**

Your appointment will take around 1 hour. This is what happens:

1. The person doing the test will start by measuring your head.
2. They will then rub your scalp and stick some small discs to it using sticky paste and glue.
3. The discs are then connected to a small recording box by wires. The box can be carried on a belt or in a bag over your shoulder.
4. You will then be able to go home and continue to go about your normal activities.

You will be given a diary to complete while you have the recorder on; it is vital that this is completed as it is impossible to report on the test without it. You will need to record what you do throughout the test and describe any symptoms that occur. If you do not complete the diary the test may have to be repeated.

There is an event button on the recorder which must be pressed when you have any symptoms/events. If you are unaware when you have your symptoms you will need to have someone with you, who is able to press the event button and complete the diary.

### **Your second appointment**

When you come back for your second appointment the information will be downloaded from the recording box; this appointment takes up to 1 hour.

Depending on whether any of your symptoms have been recorded you may then continue with the test for a few more days, or it may finish at the second appointment; your

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appointment letter will state how long the test will last and how many times you need to come to the hospital.

When the test is complete the discs will be taken off with a chemical remover. You will need to remove loose bits of glue with a comb and then clean and condition the remainder out of your hair after your appointment.

### **What do I feel during the test?**

You will feel a cold rubbing sensation on the scalp when the discs are being applied, but there are no sensations during the recording. No needles are involved.

### **Is there anything I shouldn't do during the test?**

You will not be able to have a bath or shower during the ambulatory EEG, but are able to have a sponge wash. You should also avoid chewing gum and too much vigorous physical activity during the test. Please don't attempt to remove the discs.

### **When will I get the results?**

You won't get the results straight after the test as the recording has to be analysed. A full report will be sent to the doctor who referred you for the test a few weeks later and they will discuss this with you at your next outpatient appointment.

### **Contact details**

You will be able to ask any questions or tell us any concerns before the test is carried out but if you would like to contact us before your appointment please call:

#### **Neurophysiology**

0121 507 4319

Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm

### **Further information**

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk) or follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs.

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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, CG137 'The epilepsies: the diagnosis and management of the epilepsies in adults and children in primary and secondary care', January 2012
- Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry, 'EEG in the diagnosis, classification and management of patients with epilepsy', June 2005

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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ML3792  
Issue Date: October 2012  
Review Date: October 2014