Electroencephalogram (EEG)

What is an EEG?
An EEG is a test that records brain activity. Brain activity may change with certain conditions or after an injury. The EEG can also show where in the brain these changes occur. This test is safe and painless and lasts about 1½ to 2 hours. The EEG helps your doctor diagnose your condition. It can also help to plan your treatment.

What do I need to do?
- Avoid food or drinks with caffeine for at least 8 hours before the test.
- Wash your hair on the day of the test. Do not use any hair oil, hair spray or conditioner.
- Remove hairpieces and unbraided hair before the test.
- Bring the following with you:
  - Photo ID
  - Medical insurance/Medicare card
- Please take your medications as usual, unless you are told otherwise by your doctor.

Where do I go?
Come to the Neurological Testing Center (NTC), 7th floor, Galter Pavilion. This is at 201 East Huron Street. Parking is at 222 East Huron Street. For a discounted rate, bring your parking ticket to the NTC for validation.

What should I expect?
You can lie down on a comfortable bed. The technologist (tech) will ask about your medical history, measure your head, and clean your scalp. Small metal disks (electrodes) will be placed on your head using a creamy paste to keep them in place. These are connected to the EEG machine.

When the test starts, please keep very still and keep your eyes closed. If possible, try to sleep. This makes sure that the machine only picks up brain waves, and not other movement. The tech may ask you to take deep breaths and show you flashing lights.
What happens after the test?

The electrodes will be removed and the paste wiped off. You will need to wash your hair again at home to get all the paste off. Check with your doctor who ordered the test in 2 to 3 business days to discuss the test results and further care.

To learn about the Comprehensive Epilepsy Center, visit epilepsy.nm.org.

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital’s Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.