

Electroencephalogram


An electroencephalogram (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 happen. This test is safe and painless and lasts about 1 1/2 to 2 hours. The EEG helps your physician diagnose your condition. It can also help to plan your treatment.

If you have any questions,
please ask your physician.

How to prepare for the test

- › 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 unbraid hair before the test.
- › Bring the following with you:
 - Photo ID
 - Medical insurance/Medicare card
- › Take your medications as usual, unless instructed otherwise by your physician.

Please come in ready to take a short nap, up to about 30 minutes. Many people find this easier to do if they stay up later than normal and wake up several hours earlier than their normal wake time. Some people choose to stay up all night, but check with your physician first if you want to do that. You should have someone drive you to the hospital for safety.



Come to the Neurological Testing Center (NTC) on the 7th floor of Galter Pavilion at 675 North St. Clair Street. Parking is at 222 East Huron Street. To get a discounted rate, you can validate your ticket at the NTC.

What to 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. They will place small metal disks (electrodes) on your head using a creamy paste to keep them in place. They connect the electrodes to the EEG machine.

When the test starts, 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. They may show you flashing lights.

After the test

When the test is over, the tech will remove the electrodes and wipe off the paste. You will need to wash your hair again at home to get all the paste off. Check with your physician 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.

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