York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Information about your EEG appointment (Electro- Encephalography)

Information for patients, relatives and carers

ⓘ For more information, please contact:

Department of Clinical Neurophysiology

Telephone: 01904 725665

Department of Neurosciences

York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Contents **Page**

What is an EEG?

An EEG (Electro-encephalography) is a recording of the electrical activity of the brain in the form of a graph. It is not painful and there are no after effects.

An EEG gives accurate information on the brain wave activity at the time of recording. This gives your doctor important information to help in making a diagnosis and for advising on any treatment you may require. There are a number of alternative EEGs available such as sleep deprived EEG and ambulatory EEG. Each has its advantages and disadvantages and in your case, a doctor considers an EEG to be the investigation of choice in the first instance. If you have any questions about this decision then please contact the doctor who referred you for the EEG.

How do I prepare for the EEG?

1. It is important that you have had something to eat before the test.
2. Your hair needs to be clean. Do not apply any hair products, for example gel, spray or mousse.
3. There is no need to stop taking any medication unless you have been told to do so by your doctor.
4. Any accompanying children must be supervised by another adult in the waiting room.

What do I need to bring with me?

Please bring a list of all the medications you are taking.

If you are having seizures or episodes, please bring a description of what happens to you with the dates and times of your most recent ones.

It would also be helpful if you could try and record your episodes on video or a mobile phone and bring a copy of this with you when you attend.

What happens during the EEG?

The EEG involves attaching 25 small discs to your scalp using a special paste. This takes about 20 minutes. Once this has been done you are asked to relax on a bed whilst the recording is taking place. If you are drowsy, you may be encouraged to sleep for a short while.

The recording itself can take between 20 – 40 minutes. You will be asked to open and close your eyes, undertake a deep breathing exercise, and you may also be shown a flashing light. This is called photic stimulation.

The equipment we use to record your EEG also takes a video of you at the same time.

What are the benefits of the deep breathing exercise?

Deep breathing may produce changes in your brain wave activity that could help in your diagnosis.

During the deep breathing some people may experience a light headed feeling which soon passes when you start to breathe normally again.

What are the benefits of photic stimulation?

This is an important part of the test for people whose seizures or blackouts may be caused by flashing lights. It could help in your diagnosis.

Are there any risks connected to photic stimulation?

This may, very rarely, cause a seizure in people that are sensitive to flashing lights.

How long will the EEG take?

The EEG will take about an hour.

What happens once the recording is finished?

When the recording is finished, the discs will be removed and you will be able to return home, to work or school. Your hair will feel sticky as small traces of paste may be left in your hair; this will wash out with shampoo.

The EEG recording will be reviewed, and a report will be sent to your Consultant or GP.

What do I do if I cannot attend for my appointment?

If you are unable to attend for this appointment please let us know as soon as possible so that we can offer it to another patient.

Please telephone us on 01904 725665 between 8.30am and 4pm Monday to Friday.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:
Department of Clinical Neurophysiology,
York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725667.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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