

Neurology Associates of Westchester

Neurophysiology laboratory

Frequently asked questions for EMG testing:

1. What is Electromyography (EMG)?

Electromyography, or EMG, involves testing of the electrical activity of muscles. EMG testing is often performed with another test that measures the conducting function of nerves. This is called a nerve conduction study. Both tests are often performed at the same office visit and by the same personnel.

2. Why do I need an EMG test?

When your doctor suspects you have a medical condition involving muscles and/or nerves, you need an EMG test to measure the electrical activity of your muscles and nerves. EMG may aid with the diagnosis of nerve compression or injury (such as carpal tunnel syndrome), nerve root injury (such as sciatica), and with other problems of the muscles or nerves. Less common medical conditions include amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, myasthenia gravis, and muscular dystrophy.

3. Do I need special preparation for this test?

No specific preparation is needed for the testing. Your skin needs to be clean and dry. Please do not put on excessive lotion which may interfere with the electrodes taped to the skin. There is no need to stop any medication you are taking (except myasthenia gravis medication)

4. How is EMG testing performed?

During testing, small needles are inserted into muscles to measure electrical activity. The needles are different than needles used for injection of medications. They are small and solid, not hollow like hypodermic needles. Because no medication is injected, discomfort is much less than with shots. You will be asked to contract your muscles by moving a small amount during the testing. Disposable needles are used so there is no risk of infection.

During the nerve conduction study, small surface electrodes will be taped to your skin or placed around your fingers. The nerves are stimulated with a small amount of electricity. You will typically experience a mild and brief tingling or shock, which may be a bit unpleasant.

5. How long does EMG test take?

Testing may take 30-60 minutes. You will be sent home following the procedure without any restriction of activities. Some people may have minor aches and pains from the testing.

6. What is the next step after the EMG test?

The report of the testing will be sent to the doctor who ordered the test. The ordering doctor will discuss the results with you.