

What to expect during my “Nerve Test”: Electromyogram (EMG) & Nerve Conduction Study (NCS)

What is a nerve test?

You have been referred for a “nerve test” or electrodiagnostic study by your physician. Many physicians will simply call this exam an EMG but patients may refer to this as a nerve test. For the purpose of this document we will use lay terminology and refer to the entire examination as the nerve test. A nerve test is a two-part examination that includes: (1) nerve conduction study (NCS) (2) electromyogram (EMG).

What do I do with the referral?

After you receive your appointment for a nerve test there is no planning and simply attend your appointment. Nerve testing is a specialty and often cancelled appointments may take weeks or months to reschedule based on the provider’s schedule at that location.

On the day of my appointment?

Please clean with soap and water any areas to be examined. The doctor will be examining you in many areas including but not limited to your spine, shoulders, elbows, hands, hips, knees and feet on both sides as nerve pain is difficult to pinpoint. Loose fitting clothing is preferred and please dress in layers if the weather permits. In addition, please do not use lotion or oils on the skin. You may continue to take all your regularly prescribed medications as indicated.

During my appointment?

You may feel some discomfort as electrical signals and small needle electrodes will be placed on and through the skin. Most examinations take approximately 45 minutes to an hour and will include a history, examination and the nerve test.

After my appointment?

You will be able to continue the same level of function (walking, driving, etc.) so no special preparations are needed. A report will be sent to your referring physician within 24 hours. A nerve test alone is not diagnostic and your physician will need to take this exam, your history and other diagnostic testing together to make their treatment plan so follow up with your physician is needed.



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