Having a visual evoked potential (VEP) test

This information sheet has been given to you to help answer some of the questions you may have about having a visual evoked potential (VEP) test. If you have any further questions, please speak to the clinical physiologist looking after you or call 020 7188 3954, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm, to talk to a physiologist.

As the test takes up to an hour, it is essential that you arrive in time for your appointment. If you arrive late, your appointment may have to be rescheduled.

What is a VEP?
A VEP is a diagnostic test used to check the optic nerve pathway which runs from your eyes to your brain.

Why should I have a VEP?
A doctor may recommend that you go for a VEP test when you have had changes in your vision that can be due to problems along the optic nerve pathway.

What are the benefits of a VEP?
A VEP can provide valuable information that can help your doctor reach a diagnosis and help in the management of your medical condition. The tests are not painful.

Are there any risks associated with a VEP?
There are no known risks or side-effects of having a VEP.

Are there any alternatives?
There are no alternative tests.

Will I feel any pain or discomfort?
You will feel your skin being gently rubbed when a few discs are pressed onto your head, but the test should be pain-free.

What do I need to do to prepare for the VEP?
• Please ensure your hair is clean and avoid using hair gel, oil or other hair products.
• You may eat and drink as normal prior to the test.
• Take any medication(s) as normal. Please bring a list of your medication(s) with you.
• If you wear glasses or contact lenses, please bring them with you.
**What does the test involve?**
The test takes about 30 minutes to one hour in total.

A clinical physiologist will carry out the test. They will explain the procedure to you and take any relevant medical history. Please feel free to ask any questions you have about the test to be performed.

First you will be asked to read an eye chart to check your eyesight. Then the physiologist will start by marking measurements on your head, using a soft crayon. After gently rubbing the marks with a gel, the physiologist will apply seven small discs called electrodes onto your head with some sticky paste.

The paste will be easily removed after the test although you may wish to wash your hair again later when you get home.

You will be sat comfortably in a chair for the test. One eye will be covered with an eyepatch and the lights will be dimmed.

You will then be asked to focus intently on the centre of a television screen with a moving pattern of black and white squares on it, rather like a chessboard. The clinical physiologist will take recordings on the machine as you do this. Each eye will be tested separately for a few minutes at a time. You will be asked to stay still and relaxed during the test.

Further tests may be performed during your appointment. This might include asking you to look towards a flashing light (like a camera flash), with each eye tested for a few minutes at a time. Very occasionally, we may need to perform a test that involves placing a very fine thread on your lower eyelid. Each of these tests will be explained in more detail during your appointment if they are required.

**What happens after the test?**
The discs are removed using warm water and you will be able to return home or to work/school. You may wish to wash your hair when you return home as it may feel a little sticky.

**When will I get the results?**
The results of the test will need to be analysed and a full report will be sent to the doctor who asked for the test. This usually takes one to two weeks. Results will not be available on the day of the test.

**Will I have a follow-up appointment?**
The doctor who referred you for the test will usually contact you with a follow-up appointment so you can receive your results.
Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns about the procedure, please call the Clinical Neurophysiology department to talk to a physiologist. t: 020 7188 3954, 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline
If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.
t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns
For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.
t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services
If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.
t: 020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.
t: 111

NHS website
Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.
w: www.nhs.uk

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust
Members of Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.
t: 0800 731 0319 e: members@gstt.nhs.uk w:www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

Was this leaflet useful?
We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets, or e: patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk

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