Having somatosensory evoked potentials (SSEPs)

This leaflet explains more about having somatosensory evoked potentials (SSEPs). 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 are SSEPs?**

SSEPs stands for somatosensory evoked potentials. These are signals sent from your nerves and brain in response to physical stimulation, along what is called the somatosensory nerve pathway. We are able to record these signals to help us see how well your nerves and nervous system are working. Sensory nerves that cause sensations in the arms and/or legs are tested. A doctor may recommend you go for an SSEP test if you have been experiencing feelings of numbness or weakness in your arms or legs that may be caused by problems affecting the somatosensory nerve pathway.

**What do I need to do to prepare?**

Please tell us if you have a cardiac pacemaker (especially if it is the type that can deliver shocks to restart your heart) or any other implanted device by calling 020 7188 3954 or writing to the Clinical Neurophysiology department (the full address will be on your appointment letter). When you come for your appointment, please bring any information you have about your pacemaker or other device you have.

You should eat, drink and take your medicines as normal.

To avoid having to take your clothes off at the appointment, it is helpful to wear loose-fitting clothing, preferably trousers and a top (no dresses or jumpsuits). This makes it easier for us to access your wrists, collarbone, the bottom of your neck, ankles, the back of your knees and your lower back. If your legs need to be examined you will be asked to take off your shoes and socks/stockings/tights.

Skin moisturisers and body lotions interfere with the test, so please **do not** use them on the day of your test.

Please make sure your hair is clean, dry, and free from any hair care products.
**What happens during the procedure?**
We will place some electrodes along your arms, legs, back, neck and head to record the nerves’ responses. To do this we will make precise marks on your skin using a soft crayon (these marks easily come off).

We will then rub each mark with a mild abrasive gel and stick small discs (electrodes) to the marks using a paste that washes out very easily.

You will be asked to relax on a reclined chair and will feel a tapping sensation while the nerve is being tested. This can be a little uncomfortable at first, but most people get used to it and find it painless.

The test will take between 60 and 90 minutes.

**Will I feel any pain?**
The procedure may be slightly uncomfortable but is usually painless.

**What are the risks?**
There are no risks associated with this procedure.

**Are there any side effects?**
Side effects from the SSEPs procedure are very rare and are limited to some minor skin irritation from the electrodes.

**What happens after the test?**
The electrodes will be removed and your skin is washed. You will then be able to return home or to work immediately after the test. There are no restrictions to driving, so you can drive as normal after the test.

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

On rare occasions it may be necessary to cancel your test due to unexpected equipment failure. If this is the case, we will let you know by phone or post and arrange a new appointment.
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