

How long will the test take and when does my consultant get the results?

The test may take up to one hour. Results will be sent to your consultant within 48 hours who will explain them to you during your follow-up appointment.

What will I feel during the test?

The test itself usually takes 15 minutes but please allow one hour for the appointment. During an EMG, there may be some discomfort when the fine needle electrode is inserted in the muscle. Occasionally the muscle may feel sore for up to a few days.

During an NCS, small electrical shocks are used to stimulate the nerves. These cause a quick, mild tingling but most people do not find it painful.

Are there any side-effects?

There is a minor chance of a skin reaction, due to the paste or sticky tape used.

Are there any risks?

An EMG is very safe. You may get some small bruising at the site of the needle. The needles are disposable, so there is no chance of getting an infection.

There is no risk with an NCS. The voltage of electrical pulses is too low to cause any injury and EMG machines are serviced regularly.

Is there an alternative to an EMG or NCS?

There is no alternative to these tests.

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What is an EMG and NCS?

Information and advice for patients



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Science and care combined

What is an EMG and NCS?

The term EMG is often used for both electromyogram (EMG) and nerve conduction studies (NCS). The test is used to diagnose or characterise the disorders of peripheral nerves including any compression over the nerves or nerve roots, muscle disorders, motor neurone disease and disorders of nerve and muscle junction, such as Myasthenia. It is also used to assess the effect of treatment, rate of improvement or deterioration and prognosis for various nerve and muscle disorders.

An EMG measures the electrical activity of muscle fibres at rest and during various degrees of muscle contraction. A small and fine needle, which is inserted into the muscle and the data collected.

An NCS measures how well the signals travel across the nerves, nerve roots or at the junction of nerve and muscle. Small recording electrodes are placed over the muscles supplied by the nerves and activity is monitored.

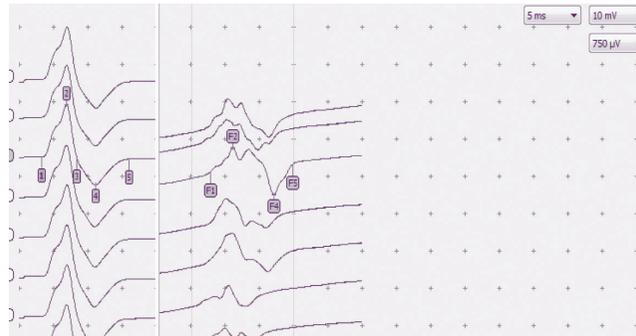
An EMG produces information that is often complementary to the information obtained by NCS.



How is the test performed?

EMG: A small and fine needle, which is connected to an EMG machine, is inserted into the muscle. By listening to and observing the potentials on the screen, the activity of muscle fibres are studied, using specialised computer software. The type and number of muscles tested depends on the symptoms and nature of illness, which need to be diagnosed or excluded.

NCS: Small recording electrodes are placed over the muscles supplied by the nerves. The area of stimulation or recording is different for different nerves tested and for different illnesses. In some clinical contexts, all four limbs and many muscles may need to be tested.



Do I need any preparation for the test?

- Your hands and feet need to be warm as the coldness may slow down the velocity of impulses. It is sensible to wear gloves in the winter when coming for the test. Your hand and feet still may need to be warmed up
- Avoid wearing moisturiser for 24 hours prior to the appointment
- Wear loose-fitting clothing so that there is easy access to the arms well above the elbows and legs up to the mid thigh
- Please remember to bring a list of all the prescription medicines you take on the day of your test
- Let your consultant know if you suffer from any allergies
- You may eat in advance of your test, but we suggest a light meal only

Please tell your consultant if you:

- Have a bleeding problem (haemophilia or low platelets) or take blood thinning medications, such as warfarin or aspirin. We may request your INR (blood clot test) results
- Have a contagious skin disease
- Are HIV or Hepatitis B positive
- Have a pacemaker

None of these are contraindications for the test except that a needle EMG will not be performed if there is a severe bleeding tendency.