

Somatosensory Evoked Potentials (SSEPs)

An information guide



Somatosensory Evoked Potentials (SSEPs)

What are SSEPs?

SSEPs stands for somatosensory evoked potentials. SSEPs test the somatosensory nerve pathway that runs between your limbs (your arms and legs) and your brain.

A doctor may recommend you have an SSEP test if you have been experiencing feelings of numbness (altered sensation) or weakness in your arms or legs that may be caused by problems affecting the somatosensory nerve pathway.

Why do I have to come to North Manchester General Hospital?

SSEP testing is not available at the other hospital sites within Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, therefore although you may have originally seen a doctor at another hospital you have been referred to **North Manchester General Hospital** for this test.

What preparation is needed?

We need access to your wrists, collarbone, back of your neck, ankles, the back of your knees and your lower back. It is therefore helpful and easier if you wear loose fitting clothing, preferably trousers and a top (no dresses or jumpsuits). If your legs need to be examined you will be asked to take off your shoes/stocking/tights.

Some skin moisturisers and body lotions can interfere with the test, so please do not use them on the day of the test.

Please make sure your hair is clean, dry and free from any hair care products. Take your medication as normal unless otherwise directed by your doctor.

Please note: Accompanying children/babies will not be allowed in the room where the test is being carried out, therefore if you need to bring a child with you, you must ensure that someone is with you who can supervise them.

What does the test involve?

Depending on your symptoms either your arms or your legs (sometimes both) will be tested.

Firstly your head will be measured and several small discs (electrodes) will be placed at specific points using a sticky paste.

For studies on your arms, electrodes will also be placed at the back of your neck and each side of your collar bone. A small electrical pulse will be used to stimulate the nerve at your wrist which will make your thumb twitch.

For studies on your legs electrodes will also be placed on your lower back and knees. A small electrical pulse will be used to stimulate the nerve close to your ankle which will make your toes twitch.

The electrical stimulus used for both the arms and legs can be a little uncomfortable but most people tolerate it.

Depending on the complexity of the test it will take between 45 and 60 minutes.

What are the risks?

There are no associated risks with this procedure.

Are there any side effects?

Side effects from SSEPs procedure are very rare. Very occasionally some minor skin irritation from the electrodes may occur.

What happens after the test?

The electrodes will be removed and your skin and head cleaned. 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 by a consultant neurophysiologist and a written report will be sent to the referring consultant within a couple of weeks.

Contacting us

If you have any questions or concerns about the procedure please contact the department on 0161 720 2780.

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

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Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

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To improve our care environment for Patients, Visitors and Staff, **Northern Care Alliance NHS Group** is Smoke Free including buildings, grounds & car parks.

For advice on stopping smoking contact the Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 01706 517 522

For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897


For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service

The Northern Care Alliance NHS Group (NCA) is one of the largest NHS organisations in the country, employing 17,000 staff and providing a range of hospital and community healthcare services to around 1 million people across Salford, Oldham, Bury, Rochdale and surrounding areas. Our Care Organisations are responsible for providing our services, delivering safe, high quality and reliable care to the local communities they serve.

The NCA brings together Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust and the hospitals and community services of The Royal Oldham Hospital, Fairfield General Hospital in Bury, and Rochdale Infirmary (currently part of The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust).

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