

The EEG Test for Newborn Babies

Information for parents

If it has been recommended that your baby has an EEG you will be provided with an explanation as to why this test is important. Please tell the nurses or doctors caring for your baby if you have any questions or concerns about the test.

What is an EEG?

An EEG is a test of electrical activity of the brain. By looking at the EEG we can get some idea of how the brain is working. The EEG is most useful at telling us if there is a tendency to have fits. EEG is short for electroencephalogram.

What are Fits?

Your doctor will tell you if your baby is having an EEG because of fits. A fit (otherwise known as convulsion or seizure) is abnormal electrical activity in the brain which causes unusual movements or a loss of consciousness.

How is an EEG done?

If your baby is thought to have had events occurring at around the time of birth which put him/her at risk of fits, or if your baby shows some types of unusual behaviour which look like fits, a bedside EEG monitor may be applied soon after admission to the unit. This is called an aEEg monitor. It gives an indication as to whether fits may be occurring. Often the doctors may be reassured and no further monitoring will be needed. However if they are concerned about this initial result, your baby may be sent for a formal EEG outside the Neonatal Unit. This gives a lot more information as to electrical activity within the baby's brain.

EEGs are done at Auckland City Hospital. A series of wires are glued to the baby's head. The wires are connected to a machine which reads the electrical activity of the brain.

The EEG usually takes about half an hour. Some babies are given a sedative before the tests so they are more settled. At some time in the examination a

flashing light may be used to see if this changes the activity of the brain.
There is no risk to the baby in having this test.

What are EEGs for?

We do an EEG when a baby has a problem, or may need a check up or follow-up test, and we believe that an EEG might tell us something we can't find out from other tests or examinations.

The most common reason for doing an EEG is when a baby is having fits.

What can Parents do?

You may go with your baby and the nurse to the EEG department.

There can be quite a long wait, so we suggest you take a book or something to do. Your baby may need to be fed while away for the EEG, so the mother or some formula may need to accompany the baby.

What will it show?

The final result for an EEG is not usually available for a few days because the doctors who check the EEG results have to look at it in detail. Sometimes they are able to tell us something right away.

An EEG will tell us if the electrical activity appears normal or abnormal. It may also say if there is a risk of the baby having fits in the future.

An EEG does not tell us anything about the baby's intelligence or ability to learn.

How do I get the results?

You must talk to the doctor looking after your baby. They will tell you why the EEG is being done, what it shows, and what it means.

Emergency Care for Fits?

Most fits will stop on their own.

Place the baby in the recovery position (the nurse caring for your baby will show you how to do this).

Do not try to put anything in the baby's mouth.

If the fit has not stopped within 1-2 minutes ring for the ambulance or your doctor.

This leaflet provides a guide only. If you have concerns or want more information about your baby, ask the doctor or nurse providing your baby's care.