All About Your EMG

What to Expect

A Gillette Guide for Children
A Note to Parents

We designed this picture book to help children understand what will happen during an electromyogram (EMG) test.

Children often feel anxious before they have medical procedures. When they know what to expect, they worry less, are more willing to cooperate, and have less difficulty at home before and after the experience.

What does your child need to know before the EMG? That depends on the child’s age.

Tell toddlers and preschoolers about the procedure one to three days before the appointment. Inform school-age children a week before the test. That will give them time to think about what you’ve told them and to ask questions about what’s going to happen. Remind children that they won’t be alone during the procedure.

If you have additional questions about preparing your child for an EMG, call our Child Life staff at 651-229-3936. If you have questions about your child’s neurology care, please call our Nursing Triage line at 651-229-3890. From outside the Twin Cities, call toll-free at 800-719-4040.
Welcome to Gillette

Welcome to Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare in St. Paul, where you’ll have your EMG. That’s the short way of saying electromyogram.
You and your family or caregiver will check in at the front desk. A friendly person will give you a bracelet with your name on it. You can read, relax or play until we call your name.
You and your parents or your caregiver will go to a room, where you’ll see the EMG equipment. A doctor or technologist will explain what you will see and feel during the EMG. Your parents or caregiver can stay with you.

Your test will have two parts, a nerve conduction study and an EMG. The tests tell us how your nerves and muscles work. A doctor will do the test and might have help from a technologist.
You will lie on a bed while you have the test. We might give you a medicine or you might get nitrous oxide, a special type of air you breathe through a mask, so you will be more comfortable. We’ll wait for the medicine to work before we begin the tests. You might feel a little sleepy.
First, we’ll do the nerve conduction study. We’ll gently rub an area of your skin with heavy paper or alcohol. This is where we’ll place stickers called electrodes. We’ll also put two rings on your fingers or wet pads on your wrists or ankles.
We’ll touch the skin near the electrodes lightly with a probe. The probe looks a little like a fork. It doesn’t hurt. It will send a small amount of electricity to your nerves.

The electricity won’t hurt you, but you might feel some tingling. It might feel the way it does when your foot falls asleep. Your fingers or toes might move. This test tells us how quickly electrical signals travel to the muscles in your arms and legs.
For the second part of the test we’ll use an EMG electrode. The electrode is like a small microphone that “listens” as your muscles move.

The EMG electrode is a very small needle. We will place some cream on your skin before we put the tip of the needle into your muscle. The cream will numb the area so you will only feel a little pressure or a small pinch. The test will take from 15 to 30 minutes.
We’ll ask you to hold still when we insert the electrode into your muscles. The EMG measures electrical activity within your muscles. If you listen to the EMG equipment, you can hear the signals from your muscles.
After the electrode is in place, we might ask you to lift or bend your arms or legs and squeeze or move your muscles. Your job is to listen carefully and do what we ask you to do. That lets us finish your EMG as quickly as possible.
Once you go home, you might be sore near the area where we put in the electrode needle. Your doctor might recommend medicine, such such as Tylenol or Motrin, or warm packs, to help with soreness. You’ll feel better in a day or so.
A doctor at Gillette will read the results and send a report to the doctor who ordered the test. Your family doctor will explain the results to you and your parents and perhaps suggest that you see a special doctor.
We hope this book helps you get ready for your EMG.
Our Mission

Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare provides specialized health care for people who have short-term or long-term disabilities that began during childhood. We help children, adults and their families improve their health, achieve greater well-being and enjoy life.