

Having EMG and NCS Tests



You will be having electromyography (EMG) and nerve conduction studies (NCS) to measure your muscle and nerve function. In most cases, both tests are done during the same visit. NCS is most often done first. You will be asked to lie on an exam table with a blanket over you. You may have one or both of the following:

Nerve conduction study (NCS)

During NCS, mild electrical currents are used to test how fast electrical signals move along your nerves. The healthcare provider will put small metal disks (electrodes) on your skin on the area of your body being tested. This will be done using water-based gel or paste. A healthcare provider or technologist will apply mild electrical currents to your skin. Your muscles will twitch, but the test won't harm you. Currents are usually applied to the same area several times. Usually, the intensity of the electrical stimulation is increased on each body part. There may be some increasing mild discomfort that varies from person to person. But the electrical shock is not dangerous. The test may continue on other parts of your body unless the reason for doing the test is limited to a small part of the body.

Electromyography (EMG)

Most of the electrodes will be removed for EMG. The healthcare provider will clean the area being tested with alcohol. A very thin sterile needle will be put into the muscles in this area. When the needle is inserted, you may feel as if your skin is being pinched. Try to relax and do as instructed. You will be asked to relax and contract the muscle being tested. Following instructions will allow your provider to interpret the test results.

Let the technologist know

For your safety and for the success of your test, tell the technologist if you:

- Have any bleeding problems
- Take blood thinners (anticoagulants) or other medicines, including aspirin
- Have any immune system problems
- Have had neck or back surgery

You may also be asked questions about your overall health.

Before the test

Prepare for your test as instructed. Shower or bathe, but don't use powder, oil, or lotion. Your skin should be clean and free of excess oil. Wear loose clothes. But know that you may be asked to change into a hospital gown. The entire test will take about 60 minutes. Allow extra time to check in. Some medicines can interfere with the test, so check to see if you need to stop taking any of them.

After your test

Before you leave, all electrodes will be removed. You can then get right back to your normal routine. If you feel tired or have some mild pain, take it easy. If you were told to stop taking any medicines for your test, ask when you can start taking them again. Your healthcare provider will let you know when your test results are ready.

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