

Electromyogram (EMG)

What is an EMG?

An EMG is a test that examines your nerves and muscles. It is usually done in two parts:

1. Nerve conduction testing
2. Muscle testing

The EMG is usually done on your arms, legs, neck, back, or rarely the face.

How do I get ready for an EMG?

Your arms and legs should be clean and warm for this test. Do not put any lotion on your arms and legs before having this test. You do not have to fast.

How is the test done?

The nerve conduction studies are done by putting sticker electrodes on the skin or small needles under the skin. Small electrical shocks are then given to a nerve. This is unpleasant and can be painful. Measurements can be made of how fast and how well a nerve carries messages.

Muscle testing is done by placing a thin needle electrode into the muscle. No shocks are given since the needle picks up the electricity normally present in the muscle. This electrical activity is shown on a special screen and can be heard over a loudspeaker. This part is usually painful. You may ask the doctor to stop the test at any time.

An EMG study takes about 30 minutes to an hour. Most people, even kids, handle it well. A doctor reads the EMG test results. The results give information about the type and severity of your symptoms. The results are sent to the doctor who ordered the EMG. S/he will discuss the results with you when you come in for your follow-up appointment.

What should I do after the testing?

You may return to your normal activities right away. You may feel some soreness, where the needle was put in, for a short time after the test.

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