

WHAT TO EXPECT WITH A NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATION

What is a Clinical Neuropsychologist?

A Clinical Neuropsychologist is a person with a Ph.D. degree in Psychology, who has been trained as a clinical psychologist and who has specialized in working with people who may have illnesses or injuries that affect the brain. When a person has an injury or illness that affects the brain, it can change a person's ability to think and remember. This may include injuries such as head trauma from a fall or accident, or illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's Disease, or stroke. It can change a person's personality too. The changes in thinking and personality can make it hard for a person to deal with everyday life, such as work, relationships with family, managing money, driving, or doing household chores.

What is a Neuropsychological Evaluation?

A neuropsychological evaluation is a way of finding out what effects brain injuries or illnesses may have on specific skills such as concentration, memory, language, and problem solving. The evaluation initially involves an interview with the Clinical Neuropsychologist. You are asked questions about your symptoms and personal history. It is helpful if a family member or friend can attend at least a portion of the session as well. This helps give another view of any changes in yourself you may have noticed. If appropriate, the Clinical Neuropsychologist will then meet with your family or friend by himself or herself to obtain more information about the symptoms you are experiencing.

During this time, you may begin working with a Psychometrist, a person who specialized in administering and scoring the tests. A series of paper and pencil tests and questions, which test your ability to attend, concentrate, remember, and solve complex problems are then given. Other tests may evaluate your vision, hearing, sense of smell, sense of touch, as well as how fast and strong your muscles are. Some tests may be given on a computer. You are not hooked up to any equipment and there is no pain involved at any time. You are also free to stop at any time.

IF YOU WEAR GLASSES OR CONTACTS FOR READING, PLEASE BRING THOSE WITH YOU FOR THE EVALUATION.

How long does it take?

The entire process usually takes several hours. In some cases, it may require as few as two hours, or as many as eight hours. If it will take over four hours, we will try to let you know at the time your appointment is scheduled. It may be helpful to schedule two appointments on separate days to prevent fatigue. If you need to schedule another appointment for the same day, making it later in the afternoon will be beneficial. If you are here past the lunch hour a break for lunch will be taken. Additional breaks are given throughout the day to prevent fatigue, to use the restroom, etc. We try to make the day as comfortable for you as possible.

What do you do with the results?

After the exam is completed and you have returned home, several hours are spent by Neuropsychology staff in scoring your tests and writing a report. Your performances are compared to those of people of your age, education, and similar background, but who have no neurological problems, to see if there are any differences between your performance and those of people like you in the general population. The report is sent to the physician or clinician that referred you and becomes a part of your permanent medical record. It is often very important in helping reach a diagnosis and designing a treatment plan. Time permitting, initial feedback will

be given the day of testing. A return visit will be scheduled with the Clinical Neuropsychologist in which you will be given more extensive feedback on your test results if it wasn't done the same day.

What is feedback?

In the feedback session, the Clinical Neuropsychologist will give you information on what your strengths and weaknesses are on the abilities that were assessed. They will not only explain the test results, but will try to help you understand how this pattern of results might impact your life (i.e. work, family, and daily activities). Strategies for dealing with some of the changes may also be discussed. Sometimes it is recommended that you come back for another evaluation in six months or a year so that your progress can be followed.

What can you hope to gain from the assessment?

A neuropsychological assessment can help you and your doctor further understand what your current strengths and weaknesses are, and how these might affect your life. Your doctor may suggest certain medications to help you feel better. Strategies for coping with some of the changes may be suggested. Cognitive rehabilitation is one type of therapy that may be recommended if it is determined that you would benefit from remediation or compensatory techniques aimed at improving your functional level. It may help with planning for the future. The assessments are also helpful to your family members, friends, or other health professionals in helping them to understand you better.