

NEUROPSYCHOLOGY OUTPATIENTS: What you need to know

You have been referred for a neuropsychological assessment by your neurologist. The clinical neuropsychology team specialise in assessing cognitive, behavioural and emotional difficulties that can arise from a neurological problem. This leaflet provides information that you need to know about the service we will be offering you.

Why have I been referred?

A neuropsychological assessment is requested when your neurologist needs an accurate description of your cognitive skills. These skills include memory, concentration, language, reasoning and general problem-solving ability. This information assists your neurologist in making a diagnosis, and can also be helpful in understanding how you are functioning at present so that any future changes can be accurately measured.

Before you attend

1. You may want to think about, or write down any specific concerns and questions you may have about your thinking abilities.
2. To help us get as clear a picture as possible, it is often helpful if a relative or close friend accompanies you to your appointment as they can sometimes add valuable information.
3. The tests involve listening closely, reading and looking at pictures, and it is very important that you wear any hearing aids (if worn), and bring any reading glasses.

What happens during the assessment?

We will first want to hear from you about any problems you have been having with your thinking skills, and any other information you think may be relevant. Your friend or relative will then be asked for their views about any changes they may have noticed in your abilities.

You will then be asked to undertake a variety of tasks, the majority of which will be spoken or paper and pencil type tasks that are designed to be not too easy or too difficult. We find that patients usually perform better when they are alone in the room with the psychologist. We therefore usually ask that relatives or friends are not present while the tests are being conducted. They are very welcome to wait in the waiting area, or they may wish to leave and return at the end of the session. There are several cafés nearby for refreshments. Occasionally, patients prefer to have someone familiar with them during testing to make them feel more comfortable. This can be arranged, although we would ask them to remain quiet throughout the session and not to prompt your responses.

It is not possible to predict exactly how long your assessment will take, although we recommend that you be prepared to be at the hospital for up to 3 hours. Many people find the tests quite enjoyable, and we will try our best to ensure that you have a positive experience. However, you may feel tired at the end of the session after concentrating for such a long time.

What happens next?

After the assessment is completed the tests need to be scored and interpreted, and so we will be unable to give you detailed feedback about your performance on the day of your appointment. This information will be summarised in a written report and sent to your referring doctor, who in the majority of cases will be a hospital Neurologist. Your neurologist will then contact your GP with your neuropsychological assessment findings, together with any other investigation results and their clinical impressions. For this reason we do not routinely forward your results to your GP as we cannot provide an overall view with our one assessment. Sometimes patients request a copy of their report, and we are happy to arrange this although please be aware that the report may be difficult to understand.

Who are we?

We are a team of four clinical neuropsychologists / clinical psychologists, led by a Consultant Clinical Neuropsychologist. Our team also has several assistant psychologists and trainee clinical psychologists, and they may carry out some of the tests under our supervision.

Further questions?

We would be happy to answer any further questions you may have about your appointment. Please feel free to contact us by phone on the following number: 020 7830 2292 (direct line).