

Electromyogram (EMG)

QE II

What is an electromyogram (EMG)?

- An EMG is a test that uses electricity to check how your nerves and muscles are working.

How do I get ready for an EMG?

- Your hands and/or feet must be warm for this test. If they are not warm, we will ask you to put your hands and/or feet in a warm water bath before the test.
- Tell the receptionist and the technologist if you have a pacemaker or a stimulator. If you do, you can still have an EMG.
- **If you are taking a blood thinner medication** (like warfarin [Coumadin®]), you may not be able to have part of the test. Tell the doctor or nurse practitioner if you are taking a blood thinner.



How is an EMG done?

- A technologist and/or a doctor will do the test. It is usually done in 2 parts:

1. Nerve conduction studies

- Nerve conduction studies use small, electrical shocks to stimulate (excite) specific nerves.
- This test can be done on nerves in your arms, legs, or face. As each nerve is stimulated:
 - › Your arm, leg, or face will twitch briefly
 - › We will measure how fast and how well the nerve transmits (sends) messages
- You may feel slight discomfort.

2. Muscle electrical activity testing

- We will put an electrode (a thin needle) into your muscles to measure the electrical activity.
- The electrode picks up the electricity in your muscle. The doctor can see the electrical activity on a screen and hear it on a loudspeaker.
- You may have slight discomfort. You will **not** be given a shock.

How long will the EMG take?

- This will depend on why you were referred for the test. It may take from 15 to 90 minutes (1 ½ hours).

When will I get the results?

- The EMG doctor will interpret your test results. A report will be sent to the health care provider who referred you for the test. This report will help your health care provider figure out what type of disorder you have.
- The health care provider who referred you for the test will talk with you about your EMG results.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by: EMG/EEG, QE II
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