



BARRINGTON Orthopedic Specialists

Specializing in You

What is an EMG Test?

Electrodiagnostic medicine is the study of diseases of nerves and muscles. Your doctor has recommended an EMG test to see if your muscles and nerves are working right. You can have problems in only one part of your body or throughout your body. The results of the test will help your doctor decide what is wrong and how it can be treated.

Why was an EMG test ordered?

You are being sent for an EMG because you have numbness, tingling, pain, weakness or muscle cramping. Some of the tests that the EMG doctor may use to diagnose your symptoms are Nerve Conduction Studies (NCSs), Needle EMG, and Evoked Potentials. The EMG doctor will examine you to decide which tests to do.

What happens during the test?

Nerve Conduction Studies – NCSs show how well the body's electrical signals are traveling to a nerve. This is done by applying small electrical shocks to the nerve and recording how the nerve works. These shocks cause a quick, mile, tingling feeling. The doctor may test several nerves.

Needle EMG – For this part of the test, a small, thin needle is put in several muscles to see if there are any problems. A new needle is used for each patient and it is disposed of after the test. There may be a small amount of pain when the needle is put in. The doctor tests only the muscles necessary to decide what is wrong. The doctor will look at and listen to the electrical signals that travel from the needle to the EMG machine. The doctor then uses their medical training to figure out what could be causing your problem.

Evoked Potentials – Evoked potentials are the painless tests that check the nerve pathways through the spinal cord or from the eyes and ears. The signals for these tests can come from small electrical shocks, light pulses, or click of sound in the ears. The nerve responses are recorded over the scalp and other areas of skin.

How do I prepare for an EMG?

- Tell the EMG doctor if you are taking aspirin, blood thinners (like Coumadin®), have a pacemaker, or have hemophilia.
- Take a bath or shower to remove oil from your skin.
- Do not use body lotion on the day of the test.
- If you have Myasthenia Gravis, ask doctor if you should take any medications before the test.

If you have additional questions about the scan, please contact the office at (847)285-4200 and ask the operator to transfer the call to your doctor's assistant.