

Pediatric Neuropsychological Consultation Service

Prepare for Your Visit

Doctors and other professionals request a neuropsychological evaluation specifically to help understand how the different areas and systems of the brain are working. Testing is usually recommended when a child's symptoms or complaints involve memory or thinking and cognition. This may include a change in concentration, organization, reasoning, memory, language, perception, coordination or personality. A number of medical, neurological, psychological or genetic factors may cause brain changes, so testing will help you and the medical team understand your child's specific situation.

During your appointments, you'll meet with various members of the neuropsychology team, including a pediatric neuropsychologist, a registered psychological assistant and a post-doctoral fellow. A post-doctoral fellow is a clinician who has earned their doctorate in clinical psychology and who is continuing specialty training in pediatric neuropsychology. A registered psychological assistant helps the neuropsychologist conduct an evaluation in a standardized way.

Visits will take anywhere from one to two hours (intake interview and feedback) to six to eight hours (testing). Testing appointments for young children are often much shorter. Although most testing sessions are completed in one day, your clinician will monitor your child's progress throughout the assessment and determine if it would be best to divide the session into two days to capture your child's best effort and prevent fatigue.

Prior to your first appointment, the clinician needs to receive any assessment or educational records pertinent to the assessment. These types of records include:

- Individualized Education Plans (IEPs).
- Psychoeducational assessment performed at school (initial, triennial and most recent assessment).
- Speech and language assessment and plan.
- Occupational therapy/physical therapy assessment and plan.
- Neuro/psychological assessments conducted outside of Sutter.
- Alta California Regional Center or Valley Mountain Regional Center evaluations and treatment plans.
- Report cards and work samples for various subjects that you are concerned about for your child.

During the interview, the neuropsychologist will review all information that's relevant to the assessment. You will be asked about your child's symptoms, medical history, medications and other important factors. Testing involves taking paper-and-pencil or computerized tests and answering questions. Some tests will be easy while others will be more complex.

How to Prepare Your Child

You can prepare for the assessment by helping your child understand that they will spend the day “flexing” their brain. Nothing will be painful or hurt; they will not receive any shots or “pokes,” and we don’t use any machines or large, noisy devices. Your child will be in a medical office environment and will meet one-on-one with the examiner; much younger children will be accompanied by a parent.

For younger children, you can describe the assessment as a day of activities done with another person that involve listening, thinking, remembering and using their hands to assemble, copy or draw. You can reassure your child that you will be nearby (but not allowed inside) the testing room during testing. For older children or teenagers, you can describe the day as being a little like school with testing.

The night before testing, your child should get a good night’s sleep. On the day of testing, be sure your child eats breakfast and takes any medications that are usually given in the morning. If your child needs glasses or hearing aids, please be sure to bring them. There will be breaks throughout the day, with a longer break for lunch, and your child can eat snacks and use the bathroom as needed.

Your clinician will not discuss the assessment results until your feedback session. At the feedback session, your clinician will discuss findings regarding your child’s medical condition, treatment and primary presenting concerns. Afterwards, you’ll receive a comprehensive written report by mail.