

Neuropsychological Testing for People with Dementia

What is Neuropsychological Testing?

Neuropsychological tests are standardized tests that measure a person's thinking abilities and emotional well-being.

Why is it done?

Neuropsychological tests help identify if an individual has a problem with brain function and help determine the underlying cause. In people with Alzheimer's or other progressive forms of dementia, these tests are also used to evaluate and monitor the individual's abilities over time. A typical neuropsychological evaluation will assess:

- General intelligence
- Attention and concentration
- Learning and memory
- Reasoning and problem solving
- Language
- Visual-spatial skills (perception)
- Motor and sensory skills
- Mood and behavior

How is it done?

You will be asked to complete a series of pencil and paper or computerized tests, such as:

- Looking at a picture and selecting a response.
- Reading a paragraph and answering a few questions about what you just read.

- Answering questions out loud.
- Performing a skill, such as arranging objects in a certain order.

Some tests will be easy while others will be more complex. The tests are typically given by a **psychometrist** (test specialist), under the supervision of a licensed psychologist with expertise in brain functions (neuropsychologist). The neuropsychologist may also ask about your symptoms, medical history, medications, and other important factors.

How long does it take?

Depending on the questions, testing might take a few hours. You can take breaks whenever you would like. Sometimes, the testing may be scheduled over several days.

Is it covered by insurance?

- If you are undergoing testing that is part of a research study, there should be no charge, unless there are special circumstances related to your clinical care.
- If your testing is related to a referral from your doctor, neuropsychological testing is usually covered by Medicare and most private insurance companies. However, you should check with your own insurance plan to make sure the procedure is covered.
- For people with dementia, it is considered a critical part of the diagnostic assessment that also includes a physical and neurological exam, lab tests, and a brain scan.

How will I benefit from these tests?

Testing can help you by:

- Helping your doctor obtain an earlier and more accurate diagnosis, which will allow you and your family to better plan for the future.

- Providing a reliable baseline, or starting point, for tracking changes in cognitive function over time.
- Providing details about your current strengths and weaknesses and helping families cope with challenges.
- Guiding medical decision-making such as specialized tests or medication.
- Helping you and your family make decisions regarding assistance with financial matters, living arrangements, or other activities of daily living.

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