

Somatosensory Evoked Potential (SSEP)

What you need to know

A somatosensory evoked potentials (SSEP) is a test that looks at how your nerves send information from your arms and legs through your spine, and then to your brain. SSEPs are done by a technologist, and the findings are looked at later by a doctor.

What is an SSEP?

An SSEP is a test that looks at how your nerves send information from your limbs through your spine, and then to your brain.

How do I prepare?

- Make sure your hair, scalp and body are clean. Do **not** use hair products (such as gel, mousse, hairspray, or conditioner). Do **not** use any hand or body lotion.
- Try to sleep 2 to 4 hours less than usual the night before your test. It is best if you are able to sleep during the test.
- You may eat and take your regular medicines before and after the test.
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing. You may be asked to change into a hospital gown for the test.



An SSEP test looks at how messages travel from your arms and legs to your brain.

How does the test work?

A technologist will:

- Measure and mark your head.
- Rub a gel onto certain spots on your head, arms, legs, back, and neck, depending on what nerves will be tested.
- Attach small metal discs (*electrodes*).

During the test, electrical pulses are constantly given to nerves in your wrists or ankles, or both. The pulses will be strong enough to make your thumbs or toes twitch. The pulses may be irritating or a little painful.

You will lie on a bed in a quiet room during the test. It is best if you are able to sleep during the test.

The SSEP test usually takes about 2 to 4 hours. How long your test takes will depend on how many nerves are tested and how well you relax.

How do I get my test results?

A *neurophysiologist* (a doctor who specializes in conditions of the nervous system) will send your test results to your doctor who referred you to us. Your own doctor will talk with you about your results.

Where will the test be done?

- Your test will be done in Neurodiagnostics, in the 7-East unit of the hospital. Take the Pacific Tower elevator to the 7th floor.
- Please arrive 5 to 10 minutes before your appointment time and check in at our reception desk.
- If you need to reschedule your test, please call 206.598.4211.

How to Find UWMC

UWMC is at 1959 N.E. Pacific St., Seattle, WA 98195. For driving directions, please ask for our handout “Driving Directions and Parking.” You can also find this handout online at:

https://healthonline.washington.edu/document/health_online/pdf/Driving-Directions-Parking.pdf

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Neurodiagnostics, 7-East:
206.598.4211