

Dermatomal Somatosensory Evoked Potential (DSSEP)

What you need to know

A dermatomal somatosensory evoked potential (DSSEP) is a test that measures how fast and how well electrical impulses travel from various areas of your body to your brain. DSSEPs are done by a technologist and the findings are looked at later by a doctor.

What is a DSSEP?

A DSSEP is a test that looks at how sensory (feeling) messages travel from different areas of your body (*dermatomes*) through different spinal nerves 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.
- Please be well-rested before this test. It is very important that you stay awake and relaxed during the test.
- You may eat as usual and take your regular medicines before and after the test.
- Wear comfortable, loose clothing. We may ask you to change into a hospital gown for the test.



A DSSEP test looks at how messages travel from different areas of your body to your brain.

How does the test work?

A technologist will:

- Measure and mark certain areas on your head.
- Rub a gel onto certain spots on your head, fingers, arms, feet, legs and/or torso and then attach small metal discs (*electrodes*). The gel and discs will go on the areas that are being tested.

Electrical pulses are constantly given to each dermatome that is being tested. Your brain's response is recorded from the electrodes on your head. The pulses may be irritating or a little painful.

You will lie on a bed in a quiet room. It is very important for you to stay **awake** and **relaxed** during the test.

The DSSEP test usually takes 2 to 6 hours. How long your test lasts will depend on how many areas are tested and how well you stay awake and relaxed.



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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, weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.