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What is Neuropsychology?

A Guide for Patients and Families



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What is Neuropsychology?

Neuropsychology focuses on how a brain functions. A clinical neuropsychologist is a licensed psychologist with expertise in how behavior and skills are related to brain structures and systems. In clinical neuropsychology, brain function is evaluated by testing memory and thinking skills. A very detailed assessment of your abilities is done, and the pattern of strengths and weaknesses is used in diagnosis and treatment planning. The clinical neuropsychologist conducts the evaluation and makes recommendations. He or she may also provide treatment, such as cognitive rehabilitation, behavior management, or psychotherapy.

What does a Neuropsychologist do?

A Neuropsychologist is someone specializing in assessing and treating the cognitive and emotional needs of patients suffering from neurological disorders or conditions. This may include: Alzheimer's disease, brain injury, brain tumors, and attention deficit disorders.

What is a Neuropsychological Evaluation?

A neuropsychological evaluation is a comprehensive assessment of cognitive and behavioral functions using a set of standardized tests and procedures.



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Various mental functions are systematically tested, including, but not limited to:

- Intelligence
- Problem solving and conceptualization
- Planning and organization
- Attention, memory, and learning
- Language
- Academic skills
- Perceptual and motor abilities
- Emotions, behavior, and personality

What is a Neuropsychological Evaluation Like?

A neuropsychological evaluation is a way of looking at many different kinds of abilities such as problem solving, attention, memory, language, and motor skills. This involves several different pencil and paper tests and may include some computer administered tests.

Many people find these tests interesting. There are no invasive procedures, no pain, no needles, or electrodes. The evaluation often takes 2 to 4 hours of face-to face contact, including an interview and the testing, but can vary widely depending on what information is being sought. The testing is broken up into several shorter tasks, so there are plenty of opportunities to stop or take a break if you wish. The evaluation can be scheduled in a single appointment or in a series of appointments.



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In some conditions where patients are expected to decline over time (e.g. Alzheimer's disease, brain tumors) a baseline evaluation may be needed to help with interpreting possible changes shown in future evaluations. A neuropsychological evaluation can assist greatly in planning educational and vocational programs. They can also be invaluable for disability determination or for forensic (legal) purposes.

The types of behaviors that might indicate the need for evaluation or treatment include:

- Memory loss
- Attention and concentration problems
- Difficulty organizing and planning
- Difficulty with multitasking
- Difficulty with communication
- Changes in spatial skills or vision
- Difficulty writing or reading
- Disturbed thinking or confusion
- Increased impulsivity

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How Are Test Scores Used To Understand My Specific Situation?

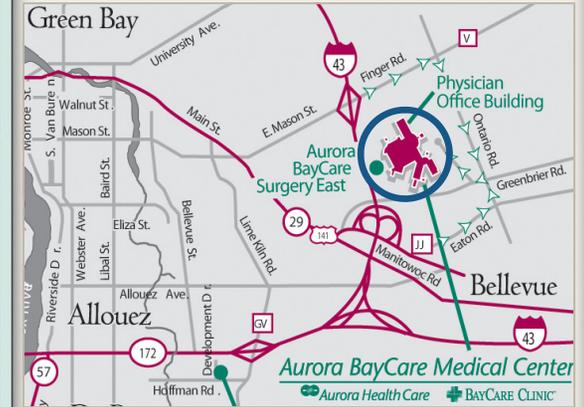
Your test scores will be compared to a database of scores from large groups of healthy people. The neuropsychologist can then judge whether or not your scores are normal for your age and educational background. Neuropsychological evaluations may:

- Confirm or clarify a diagnosis.
- Provide a profile of strengths and weaknesses to guide rehabilitation, educational, vocational, or other services.
- Document changes in functioning since prior examinations, including effects of treatment.
- Clarify what compensatory strategies ("work-around solutions") would help.
- Result in referrals to other specialists, such as educational therapists, cognitive rehabilitation professionals, neurologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, nurses, special education teachers, or vocational counselors.

When Should Someone Seek Neuropsychological Care?

When an individual displays difficulties or changes in thinking, memory, speech, personality, or other behaviors, which are significant enough to interfere with normal daily routines, a neuropsychological evaluation may be indicated.

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Appointment Date: _____

Time: _____

Facility: _____

Please register at: _____

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