
Frequently asked questions about sleep testing (Polysomnography)

Most people are not familiar with sleep laboratory procedures and equipment. In the following, we will answer some of the more frequently asked questions about sleep disorders testing. After reading this material, if you have further questions about your sleep study, please call us.

- 1. What is a polysomnogram?** A polysomnogram is a continuous recording of selected body functions during sleep. The test also records brain waves, eye movements, and muscle tone, which together determine the sleep stages. Heart rate and rhythm sleep movements, and snoring sounds are also monitored. For possible sleep apnea, we record breathing and oxygen level. Additional polysomnographic measurements can be made in people with other suspected disorders.
- 2. What sensors are applied during the recording?** Most of the sensors are tiny gold plated disks which are applied to the scalp and skin. Blood oxygen is monitored using a small, lightweight, cushioned plastic clip which is kept on a finger or applied to an ear lobe throughout sleep. Respiration is monitored by using a very thin plastic sensor which is placed between the nose and upper lip. Breathing effort is recorded using belts placed around the chest and abdomen.
- 3. Will the recording be painful?** No. If you have sensitive skin, you may notice mild skin irritation from electrode paste or adhesive. We use no needles used during this procedure.
- 4. Who will be present in the laboratory while I am sleeping?** A trained sleep laboratory technologist will monitor your sleep from an adjacent control, while you sleep in a private room. The technologist has the responsibility to make your laboratory stay comfortable and safe while obtaining a high quality sleep recording.
- 5. Will the recording procedure disrupt my sleep?** We will ask you to sleep most of the time on your back, whereas you may sleep in different positions at home. Also, most people find the sensors to be somewhat bothersome. We know that your sleep in the laboratory will not be exactly the same as it is at home. When we score and interpret your polysomnographic recording, we will take into account any disruptive effects of sleeping in the laboratory.

6. Will I be given a sleeping pill? Only if your doctor has prescribed one. Newer sleep medications have been used effectively by sleep specialists to improve sleep quality for testing purposes in the sleep laboratory and are not felt to significantly affect sleep stages or breathing. **PLEASE REVIEW ANY CHANGES IN MEDICATION WITH YOUR PHYSICIAN PRIOR TO TAKING ANY ACTION.** If you have any questions about medication, please contact your referring doctor.

7. What should I do on the day of the test?

- Since the sensors are placed on the skin and scalp, we ask that all patients shower and shampoo their hair before arriving at the lab. Do not apply oil, hair spray, or heavy conditioners to your hair.
- If you are scheduled for an overnight sleep study, we ask that you remain awake all day on the day of the test – please do not nap on the test day.
- Please eat supper before reporting to the lab.

8. Why is your questionnaire so long? Our sleep technologists and physicians review your completed questionnaires. When our doctors interpret your test results in light of your complaints, usually we can better address your doctor's concerns and your problems. Similarly, please bring a report of any other sleep tests you may have had.

9. What happens to my sleep recording after the test is done? A qualified sleep technologist will score your test data, and Dr. Gofreed, a board certified sleep specialist, will interpret the results. The results will be forwarded to your physician, usually within two to three days after your study is completed.

10. Can I shower at the sleep center before I leave? Yes, or you may return home to shower. Expect that there will be electrode paste in your hair that will require shampooing to remove. Plan to bring your own soap and shampoo for your personal use.

11. Will my insurance pay for my sleep testing? In most cases, Yes. The Sleep Center accepts insurance assignment for most patients and the tests are covered by most major health insurance carriers. In that case you would only be responsible for your deductible and insurance designated co-pay. If you have any questions about billing or insurance coverage please call us at 703-243-6700, or call your insurer. Please resolve any billing questions before your test date.

Our goal is to make your sleep laboratory experience as comfortable and productive as possible. If we can assist you in any way, please do not hesitate to ask. If you are excessively sleepy, have a relative or friend drive you to and from the laboratory. If this is not possible, use a taxi or other public transportation.