



What is a neuropsychological assessment?

Neuropsychological assessment measures the nature and degree of cognitive (i.e., thinking skills), behavioural and emotional dysfunction associated with conditions affecting the brain. It is the standard tool used in evaluating cognition (i.e., thinking skills) and is an evidence-based way of measuring changes in brain function after an acquired brain injury (e.g., stroke, traumatic brain injury, dementia).

Why have I been referred?

A neuropsychological assessment helps us understand what cognitive changes you may have experienced and identify ways of helping you and your family with these changes. There are a number of reasons why the team has referred you for an assessment. These include:

- Establishing a “baseline” or to document skills before problems are readily apparent (e.g., after you are discharged) and assist with interpretation of possible changes that may show in future assessments.
- Identify problems related to medical conditions that can affect memory and thinking, such as diabetes, metabolic or infectious diseases, or autoimmune disorders
- Help differential diagnosis among illnesses that have similar clinical presentations (e.g., Alzheimer’s disease, depression or stroke)
- Help plan treatments that use strengths to compensate for weaknesses.

What does it involve?

The neuropsychologist will look at your case history and hospital records to get an understanding of your current situation. They will talk to you about your current experience of any cognitive difficulties. They may talk to family members to find out more about you before you sustained an acquired brain injury.

Neuropsychological assessment involves completing a variety of tests designed to objectively measure brain function. A range of neuropsychological tests are used to measure a broad range of skills including attention span, concentration, memory, mathematical reasoning, abstract and organisational thinking, problem solving, social judgement, motor abilities, self-awareness and mood. These tests usually involve pencil and paper based tasks, answering questions or manipulating objects (such as blocks).

Will the evaluation make me feel uncomfortable or frustrated?

Neuropsychological assessments are painless but can take some time to finish and therefore are sometimes completed over several sessions to avoid fatigue – we want you to do your best at all times!

Some of the tasks and questions may be easy and others may be hard. Be sure to try your best on all tests. The tests are designed to challenge you. Some people feel frustrated or upset if they don’t know all the answers, but other people say the testing process was interesting and fun.

What happens after the assessment?

Your test scores will be compared to scores from large groups of healthy people who share similar key attributes to you so we can judge whether or not your scores are normal for your age and educational background, and to help determine your unique strengths and weaknesses.

The test results are interpreted and are used to make recommendations and provide strategies for guiding plans for other therapists and more importantly for you and your family. A confidential report will be generated based on the findings. The neuropsychologist can discuss the findings with you and your family and provide education surrounding cognitive strengths and weaknesses, prognosis, and strategies on how to manage any cognitive difficulties identified in the assessment.

Benefits of a neuropsychological assessment.

Neuropsychological assessments can help you, your family and your treating team understand the ways in which an injury to your brain may have affected you. This can help in understanding and supporting you, as well as assisting you in activities that are supported by your cognitive strengths and identify strategies that compensate for any cognitive weaknesses.

The results can be used for a number of things, and will depend on your situation. In general, results can be used to:

- Understand your current strengths and weaknesses.
- Help your rehabilitation team come up with the best treatment plan for your current difficulties.
- Help you make decisions about returning to work or driving.
- Help you be more successful at work.
- Make recommendations for additional treatment that will help you with recovery.
- Refer you to other professionals who can help you.
- Provide you with some ways to cope with impairments and improve relationships.
- Provide information, resources, or recommendations to your family as they help you with recovery.
- Help determine if counseling could help you.

Questions?

If you or a family member have any questions or concerns about your referral to see the Clinical Neuropsychologist please let a member of your treating team know so that we can provide you with further information.