

What is Neuropsychology and how can it help me?

A clinical neuropsychologist is a licensed psychologist with expertise in how behavior and abilities are related to brain structures and systems. Brain function is evaluated by objectively testing cognitive abilities (e.g., memory and thinking skills). A detailed assessment of abilities is completed and the pattern of strengths and weaknesses is used in important healthcare areas including diagnosis and treatment planning. Neuropsychological evaluations are typically requested specifically to help your doctors and other professionals understand how the different areas and systems of your brain are working. Referral for testing may be triggered by changes or deficits in concentration, organization, reasoning, memory, language, perception, coordination, or personality. This change may be due to a number of medical, neurological, psychological, and/or genetic causes.

Testing will assess the areas of:

- Intellectual functioning
- Executive skills (sequencing, reasoning, problem solving, etc.)
- Attention and concentration
- Learning and memory
- Academic skills (as needed)
- Language
- Visuospatial skills
- Motor and sensory skills
- Mood and personality

The specific battery will be tailored to the needs of the patient based on the referral question.

Neuropsychological testing is used in a number of ways including but not limited to:

- Identifying **strengths and weaknesses** in specific areas.
- Differentiating among illnesses/disorders, which is of the utmost importance as accurate diagnosis best informs treatment. For example, testing can help differentiate between **ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder, and anxiety** or between **Alzheimer's disease, stroke, and depression**.
- Testing is also used to establish a “**baseline**” or to document a person's skills and abilities prior to any problem. This baseline is used to measure changes across time objectively and is specific to the individual.

What to expect:

A neuropsychological evaluation consists of an interview, testing, and feedback/explanation of the findings. During the interview, you will be asked about your symptoms (including duration and severity), developmental and medical histories, medications, and other important factors. Testing will involve paper-and-pencil tests, computerized tests, and answering questions. The time required to complete the testing depends on the issues being assessed. Typically, testing for children and adolescents is 6 - 8 hours and for adults 8 - 10 hours, each completed one hour at a time though you may be able to complete two sessions in one day. Some tasks will likely be easy for you while others will be more complex and more difficult. The most important thing is to do your best. Please be certain to bring glasses and/or hearing aids if you use them. Try to rest and relax before your evaluation. Most people find testing interesting and the detailed information gathered will contribute significantly to your care.

(from Division 40 APA) Please visit www.div40.org for more information.