

WHAT IS NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT?

Neuropsychological assessment helps us understand how your child's cognitive functions compare with other children of the same age. The process involves tests of attention, memory, language, and other cognitive abilities. The tests are standardized, so every child takes the same tests in the same way.

Before testing begins, you and your child will meet with the neuropsychologist to review his/her abilities at home and school, and to see if you have observed any issues that might be important. The neuropsychologist will then guide your child one-on-one through a series of paper-and-pencil activities, such as drawing pictures, remembering lists of words or stories, putting together puzzles, and other exercises. These will include tests provided by the National MS Society's Consensus Neuropsychological Battery for Pediatric Multiple Sclerosis.

Plan to be at the neuropsychologist's office for 3-4 hours (with rest breaks).

Several weeks after your visit, you will receive a detailed report of this visit and the test results. The report will explain the tests that your child completed, describe your child's cognitive strengths, detail any weaknesses, and provide recommendations for activities that may help your child at home and in school.

WHY IS MY CHILD BEING REFERRED FOR NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT?

Children with MS and related diseases can experience cognitive difficulties. While not every child will have these problems, you or your child's teachers may observe your child struggling with these skills:

- Attention (especially dividing attention between tasks, or multi-tasking)
- Processing speed (how long it takes to think of an answer, make a decision, or complete mental activities)
- Visuo-perceptual/visuomotor abilities (drawing, handwriting)
- Learning and memory
- Word finding (thinking of the right word when speaking)
- Mental/cognitive energy

When children have problems in any of these areas, it can affect their quality of life, and impact their everyday function at home and at school.





Even if you and your child's doctor have no concerns about cognitive function, your doctor may recommend that your child complete a neuropsychological assessment to establish a "baseline." If difficulties emerge later in any of the above areas, follow-up testing will help to determine if changes are taking place.

HOW WILL THE NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT HELP MY CHILD?

The recommendations you receive with the testing report will address your child's individual needs. They might include suggestions to help your child cope with his/her health challenges, or things you can do to help your child stay organized, or remember to do chores. Test results can also provide information your child's school needs to help your child continue to learn and succeed (for example, if your child needs extra help in class or extra time for tests). If your school district has questions about your child's medical condition and its impact on his/her performance, the neuropsychologist can also provide consultation.

For older teens and young adults, the recommendations may also address college and vocational planning.

LEARN MORE

- *Students with MS and the Academic Setting: A Handbook for School Personnel*
- *Managing School-Related Issues—A Guide for Parents with a Child or Teen Living with MS*
- *Kids Get MS Too: A Guide for Parents with a Child or Teen with MS*

These and other documents are available for free download at the National MS Society website: <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/about-multiple-sclerosis/pediatric-ms/pediatric-ms-support-group/index.aspx>

For information about educational advocacy, visit these websites:

- Special Education in New York State for Children Ages 3-21: A Parent's Guide <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/policy/parentguide.htm>
- 504 Plan vs. IEP: <http://www.ncl.org/students-disabilities/iep-504-plan>
- New York State Office of Special Education: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/>
- Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy: <http://www.wrightslaw.com>