

How to Support a Child Going Through an EEG Test

We have been through many EEG tests during the course of my daughter's experience with epilepsy. I have learned a lot along the way and helped some families cope and prepare for the tests. Here are some tried and true tips I found along the way. I hope that this helps you find some peace and reassurance as you go through the EEGs tests.

Before

- Choose a time to talk about the test before the test. Ideally you have a couple of days to a week, but this is a crucial step. Our kids benefit from knowing what to expect.
 - Find a time when all is calm. I find right after breakfast on a Saturday works well. Sit down and talk about the test. Visuals help! Find a picture on the internet and talk about the process. Even better, take a picture walk through "Lina's EEG Adventure" and just talk about the process of what will happen.
 - Answer questions your child has with honesty.
 - Will it hurt? The test will not hurt, but taking off the wires could hurt.
 - Will I have a seizure? Maybe. Keep in mind, we will be in the neurologists office with all of the experts there who know what to do if that happens.
 - Are you afraid? This you have to answer with honesty, but without creating more anxiety. Reassure your child that being worried is natural, and you can breathe through it with some deep breathing and knowing that experts are there to help.
 - Be positive and share the purpose of the test. It's meant to give the doctors more information about how their brain is working and how they can help.
- When your child asks questions, or shares their emotion, be there for them. Validate their concerns and feelings. It's normal to be worried, but also curious. What do they want to learn about their seizures?
- On the day of, plan for a special experience when they get home or while they have their ambulatory EEG. If they are in the hospital, share with close friends and ask for Zoom visitors or in-person visitors, if possible.
- Make a plan to document it if your child is comfortable or young. The pictures can help you when the next EEG happens. - they will see themselves in the story.
- Practice some deep breathing techniques or soothing music with your child. When my child was less verbal, I would just sit with her quietly and breathe. I didn't need words to explain how to deeply breathe. When we had moments of challenge, she was able to start using deep breathing because we practiced when she was not upset. Deep breathing or asking for meditation music became a normal tool to use in moments of anxiety.

At the doctor's office

- Take pictures of the experience for journaling, sharing with family and friends for support, and to tell the story to your child for future EEGs.
- Have activities that can be done during the placement of the wires. Coloring, playing with a fidget spinner, or games and videos are all options a lot of us have used.
- If your child struggles upon entering the office, take a moment to sit in the waiting room or ask the technician for 3 minutes of alone time to sit and center your child. Use deep breathing and soothing music just like at home. Recreating a time of calm can help them through the anxiety.
- Save the best distracting device for when you need it the most. For us, it was when the wires came off. That's when I would bust out the favorite videos!
- Encourage your child to ask questions and answer questions they may have while wires are being put on or taken off.
- If you are going home with an ambulatory EEG, talk about what you are going to do during the time at home.
- If your child is capable of understanding the use of the machine, have them listen to the instructions and empower them to ask any questions.

At Home During a Test

- Go with your child's comfort level AND normalize the experience. My child was not embarrassed by her EEG and we went to the zoo, diner, grocery shopping, and on play dates. We explained her test and it was all fine. The zoo experience in Lina's EEG Adventure is from our own life.
- At night, it can be challenging to sleep with a backpack and EEG. Using pillows and creating a comfortable bedtime is essential.
- Check in with your child and continue documenting the experience with videos and photos.
- Give encouragement and praise for their patience, their resilience and positivity. This can be hard.
- Families - remember to care for yourself as well. I was up in the middle of the night with the test and I started going to sleep early to be prepared for middle of the night walks to the bathroom or my child's discomfort. Help yourself by relaxing too.

After the Test

- Talk about the "highs and lows" - what went well and what was difficult?
- Praise your child for making it through the test.
- Generate a list of questions together for the neurologist visit. Ask your child what they are looking forward to learning about and what they want to ask.