

# BASIC NEUROLOGICAL EXAM

## MENTAL STATUS

The doctor checks to see if you are awake, alert, agitated, lethargic, arousable with voice or gentle stimulation, or painful/vigorous stimulation, or comatose.

They take note of your general demeanor, coherence of your replies, mood and affect, content of thought, intellectual capacity, cognition, perception, intelligence, and whether you are alert to person, place and time.

They check your language and memory capacity for fluency, naming, repetition, reading and writing, and comprehension. They are looking for memory deficits, aphasia (inability to find the right word), and dysarthria (difficulty in forming words with the muscles of your mouth and tongue). They may ask if there is family history of memory loss. If there are signs of cognitive decline, they may go on to further testing.

## CRANIAL NERVE II - XII EXAM

Your eyes are checked for pupillary response, eye movement abnormalities (nystagmus), eyelid drooping (ptosis), dryness (anhydrosis), and constriction or dilation of the pupil. You will follow a light and/or their finger, look up and down and side to side. They may lift your eyelid to look for lesions. They look at your corneal reflex. They look for facial asymmetry, forehead wrinkling, ability to open and close eyes fully, lip pucker, and tongue thrust.

They may palpate your jaw and temples for tightness. They may test your shoulder shrug and arm abduction (ability to lift your arms up higher than your shoulders).

## STRENGTH, GAIT, AND BALANCE

They look for signs of muscle atrophy, fasciculations, tremor, tone, cogwheeling, and abnormal movements or postures.

They test your grip strength by having you grip their fingers. They have you hold your hands out straight in front of you to look for tremors.

They test your coordination by having you touch the tip of your index finger to your nose with your eyes closed and your ability to rub your heel against your shin.

They test proximal and distal limbs for strength by having you push and pull against resistance.

They test your ability to get up from a chair without using your hands and have you perform a deep knee bend.

They test your balance and gait by having you walk in a straight line, heel-toe walk, and tiptoe walk.

They test your deep tendon reflexes with an instrument called a reflex hammer. Tendon reflexes related to nerve roots in the spine.

Biceps	C5-6
Brachioradialis	C6
Triceps	C7
Patellar	L4
Achilles Tendon	S1

The sensory exam of the distal and proximal arms and legs involves the use of a tuning fork to see if you can feel the vibrations. They then test light touch, cold, and pinprick.