

What are neurological observations?

Information for parents and carers



Leeds children's
hospital

caring about children

What are neurological observations?

Neurological observations are a sequence of simple tests and observations that help nurses and doctors check how aware your child is and how they are responding to their surroundings. This is known as your child's conscious level and you may hear staff calling it your child's GCS which stands for Glasgow Coma Score.

To help us find out this information we look at six observations:

Eye opening

The nurse will check if your child is awake or asleep. If they are asleep they will wake your child up. We are looking for your child being able to open their eyes.

Verbal

The nurse will ask your child some simple questions like *What is your name? How old are you? Can you tell me where you are? Who is this with you?*

If your child is too young the Nurse will see how your child interacts and whether they are smiling cooing and babbling.

Grimace

For children who are unable to speak because of learning disabilities we use a grimace score instead of the verbal score. The nurse will look at your child's face for how they are responding are they smiling, usual vocal sounds etc.

Best Motor

The Nurse will check if your child can follow simple instructions such as:

- Could you pass me your teddy?

- Could you put your hand on your head?

If your child is too young or unable to follow instructions the Nurse will see if your child is able to move their arms and legs.

Pupils

The Nurse will look at your child's pupils and then shine a torch into both of their eyes. This is to check that your child's pupils are the same size and that they get smaller with light.

Motor strength

The nurse will ask your child to carry out a simple instruction such as can they push and pull against the nurse?

If your child is too young or unable to follow instructions the nurse will watch how your child is moving their arms and legs.

Observations

The Nurse will also take your child's temperature, heart rate, blood pressure and oxygen saturations.

This series of test it will give the Nurse a score for your child. The score is between 3 and 15, three being the lowest this would show your child is unwell and 15 is the highest meaning your child is fully alert and is responding.

Why do we do neurological observations?

These observations are carried out on any child who may be at risk of changes in their conscious level.

This includes children who:

- Have had an injury to their head.
- Have had surgery on their brain.

- Have had seizures.
- Have a condition such as hydrocephalus, meningitis, encephalitis or stroke for example.

The neurological observations help to assess how well your child's brain is functioning and if your child's condition is changing.

Is it necessary to wake my child over night?

When your child first arrives on the ward it is really important that we wake them often, as children with neurological problems can become unwell very quickly. For the neurological observations to be carried out your child needs to be awake. At first your child may need to be woken up every half an hour but as their condition improves the nurse will reduce how often they need the neurological observations to be carried out.

What can you do to help?

All children are different and are at different stages of development. You know your child better than anyone and therefore it is important that you help us to gain a picture of what is normal for them. This will help the nurses and doctors work out when your child's condition has changed. We understand that some children may not want to talk to the nurses and doctors and so we may ask for your help when we carry out the neurological observations.