

ALD & Neuropsychology FAQs

Neuropsychology Appointments

What is a neuropsychologist?

These are psychologists who have received extra training in how the brain works and affects thinking, emotions, and behaviors. They assess brain functions such as attention, language, problem solving, and thinking speed to draw conclusions about you or your child's strengths and weaknesses. They are knowledgeable of how medical diagnoses affect physical health, mental health, and daily life. Their goal is to help you or your child understand how the brain is working and recommend strategies or support as necessary.

What will we do at the appointment?

You may first meet with the neuropsychologists to discuss any questions or concerns that have brought you to the appointment. Often families have questions related to an individual's thinking skills or behaviors. Other times, the main goal of the appointment is to establish a baseline. The examinee (you or your child) will then complete a series of activities that look at brain functions. The neuropsychologists will analyze this data and evaluate the patterns. They will have a feedback discussion where they will share any diagnoses, strategies to compensate for weakness, and other recommended next steps. Each practice is a little different, so you will receive the results sometime between the same day and a few weeks later.

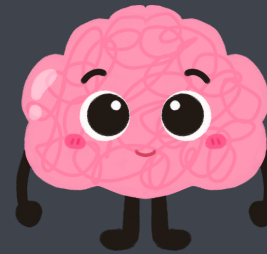
What information is collected at the appointment?

CLINICAL INTERVIEW

The neuropsychologist will ask for information about you or your child's medical, developmental, social, behavioral and educational history. They will likely ask about previous medical experiences, developmental milestones and how activities such as school or work are going. This is the time you will share any concerns that have brought you to the clinic.



BRAIN TESTING



The tests that are administered look at thinking skills such as memory, attention, language, motor skills and problem solving.

There may be a mix of paper-pencil tasks or computer based assessments. Some may be similar to games. You may be asked to remember things, draw pictures, or complete puzzles. These activities will range from seeming fairly easy to very difficult. There might be additional tests to evaluate behaviors, mood, and other psychological factors that affect thinking skills. Just like when you get lab work done in the hospital, the tools we use take samples of your brain functions to look at the whole picture of your brain health. There will not be brain scans or blood tests.

Neuropsychology Appointments

How are the reports used and what information is shared? Who is it shared with?

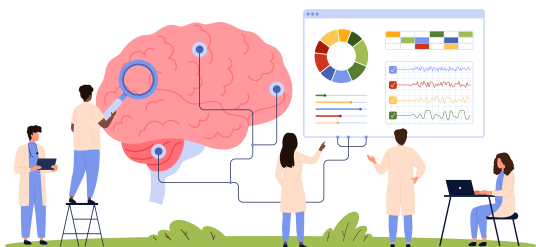
The neuropsychology reports are confidential and only shared with your care team and those you want to see it. Sharing the reports with other medical professionals can help the team plan for treatment or monitor progress over time. The report contains detailed information about you or your child's cognitive strengths and weaknesses, diagnoses, guidance for treatment, and behavioral strategies. Some professionals who frequently use these reports include neurologists, psychiatrists, primary care providers, speech-language pathologists, and other specialists managing your care.

For children and adult students, the reports can be shared with schools to develop "Individualized Educational Programs" (IEPs) or other support plans that formalize educational services, accommodations, and modifications within a student's learning environment. Reports may help educators understand how a student thinks so they can use teaching strategies most appropriate to them. If there are health-related, sensory, behavioral, or emotional needs impacting academic performance, the report can further explain that. This type of report bridges the gap between the medical and educational professionals to support a student's unique needs.

How can I prepare my child or myself for this visit?

These appointments can be long and mentally challenging. You cannot study in advance but getting enough sleep, eating a healthy meal, and packing snacks are helpful ways to show your best thinking skills! You may also want to pack actives for you or your children because there may be some downtime.

Prepare yourself or your children by reminding them that it is ok when tasks are difficult. The neuropsychologist wants to see everything you can do so it's important to try your best the whole time. It may be important to mention to children that they may spend some time in a room away from their parents during the testing phase. There will not be any procedures with medical equipment or needles.



What support can I or my child expect?

Every neuropsychology clinic is different, but you can expect the appointment to be around 3-6 hours with breaks as needed. Often short bathroom or snack breaks or a brief walk around the clinic can help an examinee recharge after challenging activities. Appointments that span over the lunch hour may offer time to get something eat as well. Consult with the location you are going to for more information.

Large hospital settings might have Child and Family Life services. These services can support families or children in feeling comfortable and secure during the appointment. Whether it's toys, distractions, adjusting the room, or explaining things to children, they are there to help. At the Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain, Child and Family Life, and our facility dog Jersey, are sometimes available to provide emotional support and high quality care to children and their families.