

What to expect during your stay in the Epilepsy Monitoring Unit (EMU)

INTRODUCTION

Epileptic seizures occur when the brain cells become overly excited due to electrical impulses. Seizures vary greatly from one person to another. For those recently diagnosed with epilepsy, it's important to understand what type of seizures they are experiencing and from which part of the brain they originate. Such information can be recorded at the EMU, and it is essential to determine a proper diagnosis and treatment plan.

Seton Brain & Spine Institute is dedicated to providing its patients with freedom from seizures and helping them experience the confidence and happiness that a seizure-free life can offer. Ours is the only Level 4 Epilepsy Center for adults in Central Texas. The rating is based upon guidelines recommended by the National Association of Epilepsy Centers. More information at SetonBrainandSpine.com/Epilepsy.

WHAT IS VIDEO-ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAPHIC MONITORING?

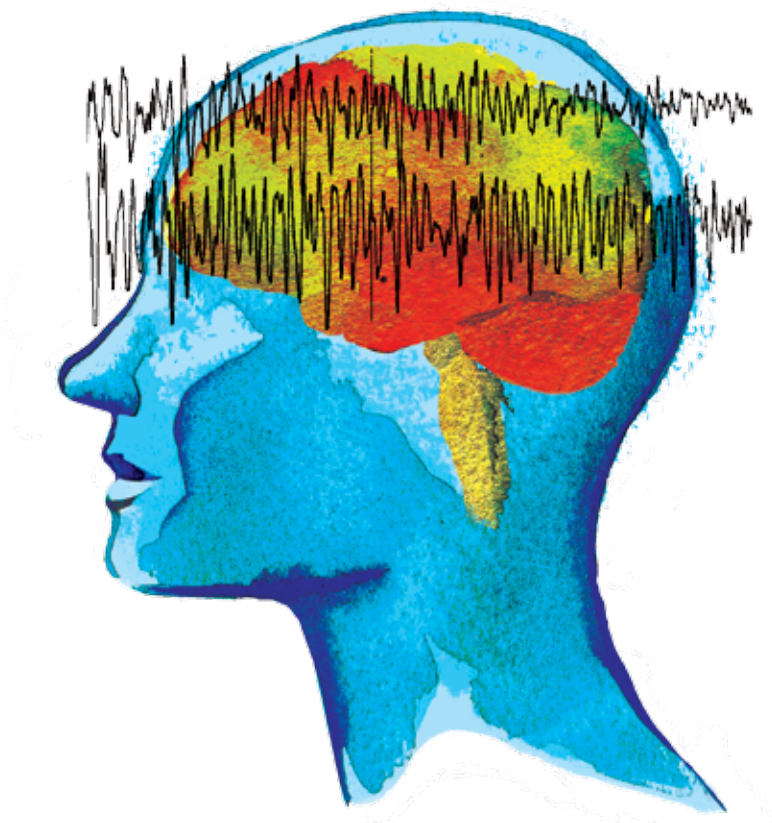
Electroencephalography (EEG) is a technique that records the brain's electrical activity by using small, metal discs attached to the scalp. It is painless. Patients in the EMU are subject to continuous EEG monitoring. And because physical behaviors (either before, during, or after each seizure) also provide clues about the origin and classification of seizures, patients are also subject to continuous video/audio monitoring.

WHAT WILL MY ROOM LOOK LIKE?

All rooms are private and include two infrared video cameras as well as a microphone for audio recording. The infrared light allows for videotaping when the room is dark. An event button is available and should be used when a seizure is beginning. It will notify the nurse and also mark the EEG. Rooms also have a reclining chair that can convert to a bed for family or loved ones who may wish to stay overnight.

INSURANCE

Insurance providers require pre-approval for stays in the EMU, and a co-pay may also be required depending on the provider. Your physician's office staff can assist with the pre-approval process prior to admission.



PLANNING YOUR STAY

Video-EEG monitoring usually takes three to five days. For pre-surgical evaluations, the stay may be longer. It needs to be long enough to “capture” more than one typical seizure. Patients are usually admitted on a Monday. Each day the EMU team will meet with you to create an action plan for the following day.

WHAT TO BRING TO THE EMU

Please bring the following items:

- All current medications – once verified, your family can take them back home
- Recent seizure calendar and description of seizures
- Items to help pass the time – see the “Activities to keep busy” section

ADMISSION TO THE EMU

You have been scheduled for an EMU admission on:

Date: _____

Time: _____

University Medical Center Brackenridge
601 East 15th St.
Austin, TX 78701
512-324-7000

Paid parking is available at the garage located on the corner of 15th Street and Red River, with entry on 15th Street. The skywalk leads to the 2nd floor of the hospital.

On the morning of admission, please:

- Shower or bathe, but do not use conditioner or gel.
- Eat breakfast
- Take your morning medications before coming to the hospital

Check in at the 2nd floor admitting desk. From there, you will be escorted to your room. In the EMU you will meet your nurse. An EEG technologist will attach small metal discs to your scalp with glue and your head will be wrapped with gauze. The EEG wires from your head connect to a small shoulder pack. You will also have an IV placed. At some point in your stay, your doctor may order photic stimulation and/or hyperventilation. Photic stimulation will involve flashing lights. For hyperventilation you will be asked to breathe hard and fast with your eyes closed. During those procedures, and at all times during your stay in the EMU, you will be monitored by an EEG technologist and nursing staff.

MEMBERS OF THE EMU TEAM

- **Epileptologist** – reads the EEG, orders medications and develops a treatment plan to manage seizures
- **EMU Nurse** – gives medications, performs assessments and helps keep patients safe
- **EMU Nurse Coordinator** – organizes admission, supports the EMU nurse and provides patient education
- **EEG Technologist** – connects you to the EEG, edits the EEG and ensures good quality recordings
- **Neuropsychologist** – tests how well different parts of the brain are functioning and rules out possible causes of seizures

CAUSING A SEIZURE

Having a seizure can feel scary, but if you have been advised to stay in the EMU then you are already having enough seizures to disrupt your life. This test is the first step toward identifying a treatment plan. Your doctor will need to capture more than one seizure in order to confirm your diagnosis. You or a family member may be able to identify things that bring on a seizure. Common triggers are stress, lack of sleep, skipping medication, infections, or flashing lights. Your physician may instruct you to decrease, by a small amount, any anti-seizure medications prior to admission. While in the EMU your anti-seizure medications may be reduced, or you may be asked to stay awake later than usual to help cause sleep deprivation. Do not reduce or stop anti-seizure medications without physician instruction.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I HAVE A SEIZURE?

We ask that a family member or loved one stay with you to help identify seizures while in the EMU. You will be given an event button to push when a seizure is beginning. The button notifies the nurse and also marks the EEG. The nurse will then check to make sure you are safe. Once safety is confirmed, the nurse will be ask you questions and have you perform simple tasks. If you experience a long seizure, or frequent seizures in a certain time period, emergency medications will be ordered.

PATIENT EXPECTATIONS

Below are things you can do to help make your stay in the EMU a successful one:

- Push the event button for any episode of concern. It alerts your nurse and EEG technologist.
- Stay in view of the camera. The video portion of the EEG provides important clues about the origin and classification of your seizures.
- Feel free to approach staff members with questions, observations or concerns. They are there to take care of you.
- Keep your bed in the lowest possible position. If you need the bed raised, please let your nurse know.
- If you plan to use earphones, we recommend "ear buds"
- Do not touch the EEG wires (electrodes). Touching them will interfere with the recording and quality of your EEG.
- Be careful with the attached cables. The cables can easily become tangled or caught in the bed's side rails. Contact your nurse if you have difficulties with any of the wires or cables.

During a seizure you are at risk of injury. For your protection, we have the following rules:

- **Safety** – A nurse or nursing assistant will need to be present whenever you are out of bed.
- **Seizure pads** – All four side rails of the bed will be raised and covered with seizure pads.
- **Bed alarm** – An alarm attached to your bed will alert the staff if you attempt to get up without assistance.
- **No smoking** – We can provide a nicotine patch if necessary.
- **Bathing** – You will not be able to shower while connected to the video-EEG. Your nurse or nursing assistant will help you wash at the sink or in the bathroom (off camera).

- **Clothing** – You may wear your own clothes. We suggest simple and comfortable items such as sweatpants or pajama bottoms and a shirt that opens at the front. You will not be able to pull it over your head. We try to minimize covers in the EMU for video-EEG.
- **No chewing gum or hard candy** – Chewing gum or sucking on hard candy can hide the electrical activity.

ACTIVITIES TO KEEP BUSY

You will spend most of your time in bed or seated in a chair while waiting for a seizure. This can become boring. We encourage you to bring books, games or puzzles to help pass the time. Cable TV is available in each room. DVD and VCR players are available on occasion.

If you bring electronic devices from home, the EEG technologist will check to make sure they do not interfere with the EEG. If a device interferes with the EEG you may be asked to not use it. If recharging is necessary while in the EMU, please do so while the device is turned off. The hospital is not liable for any damage or loss of personal devices.

**If you have questions,
please call our office at 512-324-3540**



**Seton
Brain & Spine
Institute**

**COMPREHENSIVE
EPILEPSY PROGRAM**

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