

Neurological Observations

Information for parents and/or caregivers

What are neurological observations?

Neurological observations check:

- how children move their arms and legs
- how they answer some questions
- pupil size and reaction by shining a small torch into each eye
- blood pressure, pulse and breathing rate.

Why do we do neurological observations?

Neurological observations are very important in assessing a child's level of consciousness and may be needed in many settings, including:

- after head injury
- after seizures (fits)
- infections or other problems of the brain
- before and after brain surgery
- after suspected loss of consciousness
- in patients who have had shunts inserted which may be blocked

This will show if there has been any change in their condition which may need specific treatment.

The nurse caring for your child will need to do these observations as often as ordered by the doctor, and they may be done as often as every 30 minutes or as little as three times a day. They will be done when there is a change of nursing staff and more often after surgery.

Why is my child woken up?

If your child is asleep when the neurological observations are due they will always be woken up. Without waking a child it is impossible to tell if their neurological condition has changed. We understand that your child may be very tired and needing sleep, but to assess your child's condition accurately a sleeping child will need to be woken up, even at night. Please let the nurse know if you also wish to be woken up when your child is woken.

What can I do?

Tell the nurse if your child:

- seems irritable, confused, disorientated (do not know where they are) or just not their usual self
- seems more sleepy than usual
- says they have a headache
- vomits or says that they feel sick
- says that they have double vision or blurry vision.

If you have any questions or concerns don't hesitate to speak to either the nurse caring for your child or the Medical Staff.

For more information

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This document has been reviewed and endorsed by consumers.

If you require this information in an alternative language or format please contact SA Health on the details provided and they will make every effort to assist you.