

Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) Instructions and Patient Information

Why was the test ordered?

Your physician has referred you for an Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) test because you are presenting with any of the following symptoms in one or both ears: poor speech understanding that does not correlate to your hearing capabilities, hearing noises in one ear, a difference in hearing capability between the ears that was found during the audiometric evaluation. The physician and audiologist have already completed a variety of tests to assess your hearing and the results suggest further assessment is warranted.

The test provides information on the passage of auditory signal along the hearing nerve from the ear to the brainstem. This test is a screening device for a 'blockage' on the hearing nerve. The ABR can be used to help identify the presence of certain medical conditions that affect hearing, such as growths along the auditory pathway. The ABR is a reliable, objective, noninvasive and painless test of the auditory pathway.

How is the test done?

There is no discomfort during this test. You will be placed in a reclined position and instructed to relax as much as possible. Some patients have been known to drift off into sleep and this is fine. The audiologist will place surface electrodes, using paste and tape to 4 points: earlobes, forehead and top of the head. A series of clicking noises will be presented through headphones. You will not be asked to do anything during the testing except relax and keep your eyes closed.

Are there any special instructions prior to the test or medications that should be avoided?

No. The ABR is not affected by medications; in fact the only thing that creates a problem with the ABR is if you do not relax. It is advised to not wear earrings to the test as you will be instructed to remove them. This for two reasons: 1) electrodes may be places on your earlobes; 2) you will be wearing headphones and most patients to not find this comfortable while wearing earrings.