

Neuropsychology

What is Neuropsychology?

Neuropsychology is one of the specialties that diagnose and treat behaviors caused by brain dysfunction, disease or injury. At the current time, a neuropsychological assessment is the most sensitive method available for assessing memory loss and cognitive problems. An assessment can detect a problem years before the illness becomes clinically apparent. This allows for early treatment.

The patient's verbal and visual memory, the ability to learn new information, attention and concentration, and other skills important to daily functions are assessed. Taking several hours to complete, it is best done over two or more appointments. Additional information is gained from a family member or a close friend who is invited to speak with the doctor. Since dementia may put certain patients at risk when driving an automobile, driving abilities testing may be recommended.

At the completion of the assessment, the neuropsychologist meets with the patient and family members to discuss the test findings and to make recommendations for treatment or rehabilitation. A neuropsychologist should also be able to make suggestions in structuring support systems to compensate for the brain injury. Do not hesitate to ask as many questions as needed.

Frequently, abilities change dramatically in the first couple of years following an injury. A follow-up evaluation should be done within two years after the injury occurs.

How to Find a Good Neuropsychologist

A neuropsychologist should have a state license to practice psychology and have a Ph.D. in psychology. After receiving a Ph.D., a neuropsychologist should have additional supervised training and experience in the cognitive and behavioral evaluation of individuals with various types of brain injury and disease. Some neuropsychologists are certified by the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP). However, the certification is fairly new; several qualified neuropsychologists do not have ABPP certification. To find a good neuropsychologist, you should ask the same questions that you would ask of any professional.