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Child Assessments

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1 Pediatric Neuropsychological Assessments

(or comprehensive psychoeducational assessments)

What is it?

A Neuropsychological assessment (NP) is a comprehensive standardized assessment of cognitive processes. It allows a psychologist to understand how a child processes various information, learns, thinks, behaves etc. and compares the test-taker to an age-appropriate norm. NP assessments are also commonly known as Psychoeducational assessment.

A typical neuropsychological evaluation of a school-age child may assess these areas:

- General intellect (IQ)
- Achievement skills, such as reading and math
- Executive skills, such as organization, planning, inhibition, and flexibility
- Attention
- Learning and memory
- Language
- Visual-spatial skills
- Motor coordination
- Behavioural and emotional functioning
- Social skills

Some abilities may be measured in more detail than others, depending on the child's needs. A detailed developmental history and data from the child's teacher may also be obtained. Observing your child to understand his or her motivation, cooperation, and behaviour is a very important part of the evaluation.

Who Conducts it?

Paediatric neuropsychologist, educational psychologists, and in some cases, clinical psychologists, are trained to administer a comprehensive NP assessment. Paediatric neuropsychology is a professional specialty concerned with learning and behavior in relationship to a child's brain. A pediatric neuropsychologist is a licensed psychologist with expertise in how learning and behavior are associated with the development of brain structures and systems. The paediatric neuropsychologist conducts the evaluation, interprets the test results, and makes recommendations. He or she may also provide treatment, such as cognitive rehabilitation, behaviour management, or psychotherapy. The neuropsychologist will work closely with schools to help them provide appropriate educational programs for the child.

Dr. Cynthia Roukoz

Psychology, Neuropsychology



When is assessment required?



When a parent or teacher has concerns about the child's learning abilities in one or more academic areas. For example, an assessment may be necessary to identify children with dyslexia, or ADHD and understand the impact of their difficulties on their academic performance and overall behavior.

When a child or adolescent's behaviour, adaptive skills, social skills, or level of independence are not meeting age-expectations.

In any medical conditions linked to a possible impact on a child's cognitive development (thyroid problems, prematurity, epilepsy, brain tumours, leukaemia, down syndrome etc).

In cases of brain injury including concussions, traumatic brain injury.

A comprehensive NP assessment is an important step to plan treatment accordingly. It will allow the child's family, educational team, and treatment team to compile a comprehensive treatment plan to ensure the child's optimal development and evaluate the student's eligibility for special education services and/or test accommodations.

2 Assessment for Autism Spectrum Disorder



Children presenting any of these behaviours should be assessed for Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Poor social interactions

Obsessions

Odd speech patterns

Limited facial expressions

Other peculiar mannerisms

Engaging in obsessive routines and show an unusual sensitivity

Who conducts ASD assessments?

- Clinical psychologists
- Child and adolescent psychologists
- Child and adolescent psychiatrists

Tools to Assess Children for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Our clinicians use these tools and assessments to analyse and assess the disorder.

ADOS Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS)* Catherine Lord, PhD, Michael Rutter, MD FRS, Pamela C. DiLavore, PhD and Susan Risi, PhD ADOS Purpose To evaluate almost anyone suspected of having autism Candidates 2+ years of age Administration 35–40 minutes per module Content. The ADOS can be used to evaluate almost anyone suspected of having autism—from toddlers to adults, from children with no speech to adults who are verbally fluent. This semi-structured assessment consists of various activities that allow you to observe social and communication behaviors related to the diagnosis of pervasive developmental disorders. These activities provide interesting, standard contexts in which interaction can occur.



Childhood Autism Rating Scale (CARS)

This widely-used assessment tool helps identify children with an autism spectrum disorder and determine the severity of their condition. It includes 15 items that evaluate:

Social interaction

Emotional regulation

Thinking skills

Ability to adapt, and more

Each item is rated on a scale of one to four. It's a highly sensitive test for children ages 2 and older, but some studies have shown that CARS may over-diagnose young children as having autism.

Gilliam Autism Rating Scale (GADS)

This is especially helpful in distinguishing between autism, Asperger's, and other behavioral disorders. It is appropriate to use on individuals between ages 3 and 22.

Autism Spectrum Rating Scales (ASRS)

This evaluation detects symptoms and behaviors of autism spectrum disorders in children ages 2 to 18. It takes about 25-30 minutes to complete and is the first test that compares the child with a national sample of children with autism spectrum disorders.

Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS)

This test is commonly used to distinguish autism spectrum disorders from other psychiatric conditions. It takes about 20 to 25 minutes to complete and is suitable for kids ages 4 to 18.



3 Developmental Assessment 0-6

Developmental assessments are often used to identify areas of growth or developmental delays in children typically between the ages of 0 and 6. After the age of 6, children should go through comprehensive Neuropsychological assessments to identify their areas of cognitive strengths and weaknesses. They can be completed by a psychologist, neuropsychologist, school psychologist, or paediatric neurologist (in some cases). The developmental assessment takes into consideration the age and development level of each individual child. It uses various tests to identify areas of weaknesses and strengths as well as “red flags” or “early signs” of possible neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g. ADHD or learning disabilities). It also allows a psychologist to identify early signs of an Autism Spectrum Disorder and provide appropriate treatment planning for early interventions.



4 ADHD Evaluation

ADHD testing is usually conducted through surveys with caregivers and teachers as well as additional measures.

ADHD testing is required when:

- Several symptoms present before age 12
- Symptoms are present in multiple settings (home, school, work)
- Symptoms interfere with or reduce daily functioning
- Symptoms are not better explained by another mental health condition

Who conducts the evaluation?

Psychologist, Neuropsychologist or child and adolescent Psychiatrist.

Important things to know about ADHD Evaluation.

This may be done in conjunction with other testing or as "stand-alone" testing when ADHD is suspected.



5 Epilepsy Surgery Assessment

If you're thinking about epilepsy surgery for your child, they'll need some tests to decide if they're a candidate. Our epilepsy experts will do a pre-op assessment and tests.

Why do we perform this assessment?

Pinpoint the area in your child's brain where the seizures start.

Find out if surgery is possible or needed.



6

Psychosexual Assessment

This evaluation is needed if:

- Sexual abuse perpetration is alleged or suspected
- Information is needed regarding child's risk of re-offending, need for supervision and/or treatment recommendations

Who can assess?

Clinical psychologist

Important things you should know about this assessment.

- 1 This psychologist has specialized knowledge of sexual development and issues related to sexual abuse perpetration.
- 2 Interviews with caregiver and child focus more on a child's sexual development, sexual attitudes, sexual interests, and sexual behaviors.
- 3 One-on-one testing with the child (e.g. personality testing)



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Psychiatric Assessment

When would your child require this assessment?

- A child is showing serious emotional or behavioral problems
- To determine if symptoms have a physiological cause
- Medication is being considered as a treatment option

Who conducts this assessment?

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Important things to know about the psychiatric evaluation.

- 1 A psychiatrist has specialized knowledge of medications for mental health problems and can give prescriptions if necessary.
- 2 If needed, laboratory studies such as blood tests, x-rays or physical examination are ordered to rule out physical health problems as a cause of symptoms.

Dr. Muhammad Tahir

Child, Adolescent and Adult Psychiatrist



Preparation Tips for Parents:

How to prepare your child for a mental health assessment

For most children, participating in a mental health evaluation will be a new experience and they may feel nervous or confused about why they need to go. Preparing your child ahead of time by telling him or her what will happen and why the testing is important can alleviate some anxiety.

Here are five tips that can help to make the experience of a mental health evaluation a positive experience for your child:

1. Talk to your child about testing: Some children may worry about what is "wrong" with them when they learn that they need to go for testing. It's important to let your child know that many children and teens go for evaluations at some point to understand how they think, learn, or experience and deal with their emotions. With older children, it may be helpful to encourage them to think about whether they have any questions of their own that they would like to talk with the professional about.

2. Avoid telling your child that they will be playing "games": Children often find some of the tasks involved in evaluations fun, but some tasks may be challenging or boring to your child. A child may be disappointed or upset to find that the tasks are not what they would consider to be "games." Instead, you can tell your child that they will likely be asked to answer questions and complete tasks, some of which will be easy and some that might be more difficult.

3. When possible, carefully schedule testing dates: Check your child's schedule to make sure that they will not be missing a field trip, sports game, or other special activity when testing; their disappointment or upset could affect their attitude towards testing. Also be aware of changes in family routine that might affect your child, such as a move or a caregiver being out of town.

4. Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep before testing: A good night sleep is important to ensure that a child is able to perform their best at testing. A child's ability to pay attention and their level of effort can all be affected by a poor night's sleep.

5. Make sure your child has eaten well before testing: Food is also essential to a child's ability to think and pay attention. If testing is taking place in the morning, make sure your child eats a good breakfast. If your child is testing in the afternoon, consider giving them a snack on the way. Also, you can ask the professional doing the testing if it is okay to bring a drink or snack for your child if testing will last a few hours.

Once an evaluation has been conducted, we will discuss the various treatment options available and develop a plan to help your child become the best version of themselves.

