Overnight Polysomnogram with MSLT

What is a polysomnogram, and why do I need one?

Polysomnogram, pronounced “poly---somno---gram,” is simply the technical term for a “sleep study.” So, what then is a sleep study?

A sleep study is a complex medical test that involves recording a person’s sleeping patterns, breathing, limb and body movements, and heart activity. Sleep is far from a simple process and with over 60 classifiable sleep disorders an in-laboratory test is considered the “gold standard” method to confirm the presence of and differentiate between these many unique disorders.

To perform a polysomnogram, a staff of highly trained technologists will place specialized sensors on your head, face, chest and legs. Using the output of these sensors along with a standard microphone and a low-light video camera, the technologist will closely monitor your sleep. You can rest easy knowing a qualified staff member will be watching over you and seeing you safely through the night.

What is a multiple sleep latency test, and why do I need one?

A multiple sleep latency test, or simply an MSLT, is a nap study that is performed during the daytime following the conclusion of your overnight sleep study to see how quickly you fall asleep during the daytime if given the opportunity in a quiet situation.

This testing process involves a series of scheduled nap opportunities throughout the day during which you are asked to lay down and try to fall asleep. Your technologist will generally awaken you at 6am from the overnight sleep study and the nap opportunities will begin 1.5 to 3 hours later, performed every two hours throughout the day. A typical nap schedule would involve trials beginning at 8am, 10am, 12pm, 2pm, and 4pm. Between each nap you will need to remain awake and out of bed. A urine sample for testing will need to be collected between two of the naps.
Overnight Polysomnogram with MSLT (continued)

Arrival and Departure

VCU Center for Sleep Medicine performs overnight sleep studies on Sunday through Friday nights with patients scheduled to arrive at either 7:30 p.m. or 8:30 p.m. The night staff is on duty from 7:00 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. So before 7:00 p.m. you will not be able to enter the building.

We do ask that you arrive at your scheduled time the evening of your appointment. Please notify us at least 24 hours in advance if for any reason you will be unable to arrive for your test. Failure to do so will greatly impact our ability to service your and other patient’s healthcare needs and may result in a rescheduling fee.

Your sleep study will conclude at approximately 5:00 PM the following evening, after which, the technologist (tech) will remove the sensors. If you will be relying on someone else for transportation, be sure to arrange for them to arrive to pick you up by 5:00 PM.

Please recall that VCU Center for Sleep Medicine is located in Bon Air and not on VCU Medical Center campus. We run a clinic and testing center only and have no cafeteria or vending machines; you should eat dinner prior to coming in for your overnight testing as well as bring something to eat and drink (must be non-caffeinated) for breakfast and lunch for the time spent here during the daytime portion of testing.

On the day of your sleep study

On the day of your scheduled sleep study, try to refrain from taking naps and avoid alcohol and caffeine (cola, coffee, tea, chocolate, etc.) after 5:00 p.m.

Prior to arrival, wash your hair with shampoo only, dry your hair and do not apply any oils, gels, or sprays. Please also do not apply lotion to your face, hands, arms or legs. Failure to follow these needed preparations, will typically lead to either a reduced quality, or rescheduling of your sleep study to another night, delaying your own diagnosis and treatment.

What to bring

Please bring a list of your current medications and any medication(s) that you will need that night and the next morning. Please take them on your regular schedule unless you have been instructed by your sleep physician. As always, if in doubt, please call our office to discuss your medications.

You will need to bring breakfast and lunch for the next morning testing period, pajamas (preferably two-piece) since we do not allow sleeping in the nude, and comfortable clothes for the series of naps the next day You should also bring any personal hygiene items you will need such as shaving items, shampoo, toothbrush, hairbrush, etc.

Many of our patients find it enhances their sleep to bring their own pillow to use along with ours and possibly a blanket that you enjoy sleeping with that will make you feel more at home. You may bring a book or something else to occupy any potential idle time if you prefer not to watch TV prior to bedtime in the evening before sleep and also for the wake periods between each nap test.
Overnight Polysomnogram with MSLT (continued)

What will happen when I arrive?

For the safety of our patients and staff, the center is kept secure and locked overnight. When you arrive at the time of your scheduled appointment you will find an intercom to the right of the front door. Please push the intercom button “once.” A staff member will respond and ask you to identify yourself. Once your identity and appointment have been confirmed, the staff member will allow you to enter the building and escort you to your sleep suite for the night.

Your tech will then ask you to change into your pajamas and fill out your bedtime questionnaire. Once you are finished changing and have completed the questionnaire, your tech will return and fully explain the procedure. They may fit you with a mask to introduce you to Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP). CPAP is the most effective method for treating the sleep disorder known as “obstructive sleep apnea” (OSA) and may be used during the night if you show a high degree of OSA within the first two hours of sleep. The tech will then begin applying the sensors. The hook-up process is quite lengthy, but relatively painless, so plan on sitting for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Bedtime is generally around 10:00 p.m. as this allows you to accommodate to the new surroundings before trying to sleep. Once the study starts, you will be monitored from the laboratory control room by your tech. He or she will be there all night so if you need to use the restroom or if you need anything else you can call out and they can hear you over the intercom in your room.

If it is determined that there are too many sleep disturbances during your overnight sleep study, your physician may elect not to perform the daytime portion of testing. If this occurs, you will be able to leave early. Otherwise, your testing will end at 4:30 p.m. the following afternoon, and you should be ready to leave by 5:00 p.m.

Accommodations

In a home-like setting, each bedroom features an attached private bathroom with shower. Each sleep suite also features a flat-screen television with DVD player for your use this night.

All pediatric patients require the presence of a parent or legal guardian throughout the testing process and this person will be provided sleeping accommodations (only one parent per patient, please). Also, if someone needs special care or assistance (i.e. assistance changing clothes, tracheotomy care, feeding tube care, etc.), we also require that a trained caregiver remain with the patient for the duration of the sleep study. There will be no nurses or doctors at the center during the night. Any other visitors will be asked to leave at bedtime.

How do I get my test results?

If you are a VCU Medical Center patient, you will receive your results during your pre-scheduled follow-up appointment. If you need to schedule a follow-up appointment, call our office at 804-323-2255. If you are not a VCU Medical Center patient, please contact your referring physician for your test results.
Overnight Polysomnogram with MSLT (continued)

Test Dos and Don’ts

- **DO** come on time for your scheduled appointment.
- **DO** eat dinner **before** you come.
- **DO** bring **breakfast and lunch** for your daytime testing.
- **DO** bring your own toiletries.
- **DO** have clean, dry hair and skin; this is a must!
- **DO** shave your face that day – if this is your regular practice (men).
- **DO** bring two piece pajamas; sleeping nude is not allowed.
- **DO** bring any medication(s) you will need for the night and next morning, and please bring a current list.
- **DO** accompany a minor with a parent or legal guardian; this is a must!
- **DO** provide an overnight caregiver for patients with special needs.

- **DON’T** come late; you may be asked to reschedule.
- **DON’T** come too early; no one will be here to greet you.
- **DON’T** have any food or drink items containing caffeine or alcohol after 5 PM.
- **DON’T** nap the day of your study.
- **DON’T** wear any body lotions, oils, moisturizer or make-up.
- **DON’T** bring overnight guests; they will be asked to leave.