

## **MAINTENANCE OF WAKEFULNESS TEST (MWT)**

The maintenance of wakefulness test (MWT) is intended to challenge patients to attempt to stay awake during periodic trials during the day. The MWT is used particularly for people in occupations where the ability to stay awake is a safety concern. The MWT is also used to determine if treatment for a sleep disorder such as obstructive sleep apnea or narcolepsy has been successful in resolving the excessive daytime sleepiness.

Increasingly, a number of occupations are requiring MWTs for workers whose jobs require long periods of low-activity where safety is a concern. These types of occupations include: truck drivers, taxi drivers, pilots, and more. Many employers who are aware of an employee's sleep disorders may want to verify that their employees are maintaining compliance with their therapy by ordering a MWT to make sure they are awake and alert during normal working hours.

### **MWT PROCEDURE**

A maintenance of wakefulness test is administered over the course of a day at the Sleep Disorders Center of Santa Maria. The purpose of the MWT is to measure how alert you are during the day and if you are to stay awake for a period of time in a quiet, relaxing, stimulation free environment.

During the test, patients are given 4-5 trials of 40 minutes of relaxing in a quiet, dimly lit bedroom during which time you will be asked to sit still while looking forward, and not do anything stimulating that could intentionally keep you awake. You are not allowed to talk aloud, sing, read, or pinch yourself.

The rooms are meant to isolate external factors such as noise, temperature, light, and activity. Basically anything that can keep a person awake through some sort of stimulation or discomfort is removed.

Patients are connected to a variety of leads that monitor brain activity with 4 EEG (electroencephalography) leads, eye movements, chin movements.

The first trial begins about 2 hours after your normal wake-up time.

Each trial is spaced about 2 hours apart, during which time you can watch TV, read a book, have a meal, or move freely about the sleep center. You are not allowed to go outside as daylight is a factor that needs to be eliminated during a test.

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### RESULTS OF THE MWT

Patients that are not experiencing excessive daytime sleepiness (EDT) should not have any trouble staying awake during each 40 minute trial. The trials end either after 40 minutes have passed and patients have remained awake the entire time, or when you fall asleep. If patients fall asleep at any time in the 40 minute trial, the trial is ended early.

After the 4 or five trials a sleep technologist will look over the results and review the results with a board certified sleep specialist. Results of the test will help determine your level of sleepiness during the day.

If the MWT does show you that you are unable to be vigilant and stay awake at the appropriate times during the test a medication to help with your alertness may be necessary. If you are still experiencing excessive daytime sleepiness after you have been prescribed therapy for your sleep disorder, you may want to discuss your symptoms with your primary care physician or contact the Sleep Disorders Center of Santa Maria to see if a maintenance of wakefulness test is appropriate for you.

If you work in the transportation industry and your employer wants to verify you are capable of remaining awake and alert during the day, you may need to have a MWT performed.

There are serious risks to drowsy driving, and making sure you are capable of maintaining wakefulness is key to not only your own safety, but the safety of others as well.