

The Triceps Jerk

1. What it is.

A contraction of the triceps muscle when the triceps tendon is stretched.

2. What it tests.

A reflex arc involving the 6th and 7th cervical segments.



across the mid part of the chest. This should be enough to give some initial stretch to the triceps tendon.



down and across to strike the triceps tendon sharply. Don't put your finger on the tendon.

- When eliciting the patient's right Triceps Jerk it is often easier to swing the hammer *under* your supporting left arm.

5. Grade and interpret the response

This is the same as for the knee jerk

3. The stimulus

A sharp tap over the triceps tendon using a patellar hammer.

4. How to elicit it

- Bend the patient's arm at the elbow so it is lying relaxed
- Gently support the arm by holding it against the chest
- Identify the triceps tendon just above the elbow
- Swing the patellar hammer

6. Confirm the finding

Repeat the observation.

7. Test the other side.

8. What can go wrong

- You find no reflex because the patient is not relaxed. Say " Relax your shoulders" this works better than asking them to relax their arm.
- You find no reflex because the striking the patient's arm is painful. They have some other problem there.
- You *poked* at the tendon rather than striking it sharply. The tendon has to be stretched fairly quickly to elicit the reflex.
- You did not stretch the tendon enough to start with.
- You hit the muscle and not the tendon. Muscle contraction under these circumstances is a direct response and not dependent on an intact reflex arc.