

# 12 Lead Electrocardiogram Test (ECG)

Information and advice for patients

## Cardiology Diagnostics

### What is a 12 Lead Electrocardiogram (ECG)

An ECG is a very common test that is used to evaluate the rhythm and electrical function of the heart. It is a very simple and brief test that will cause you no discomfort or side effects. It will take no longer than 10 minutes.

### What is the benefit of the test?

An ECG may be done for a number of reasons. These include:

- To determine the rate and rhythm of your heart
- To help find the cause of chest pain/dizziness
- As part of a pre-operative assessment
- Part of a screening process
- For re-assurance.

### What are the risks of the test?

There are no risks although you might find it a little uncomfortable when electrodes are removed from your chest at the end of the recording.

### What are the risks of not having the test?

If you choose not to have the ECG test this may delay your doctor finding out what is causing your symptoms and starting treatment.

### Are there any alternative tests?

There are no alternatives to this test that will give your doctor the information they need.

### Preparing for the test

- Wear clothes that allow easy access to the top half of your body
- Do not apply creams, oils or ointments of the day of the test as the electrodes will not stick to your skin
- Your skin will be lightly abraded in order for the electrodes to adhere to your skin in some instances we may need to shave the test area

### During the test

The test will be performed by a specially trained cardiographer or cardiac physiologist (they could be either male or female members of staff). They can record and understand ECG's. They will ask you to undress to the waist. You will then be given a gown to protect your modesty and asked to lie on a couch.

Sticky tabs called electrodes will be applied to your chest and limbs. Cables from an ECG

# 12 Lead Electrocardiogram Test (ECG)

Information and advice for patients

## Cardiology Diagnostics

machine will be attached to each of the sticky tabs. An ECG machine is a piece of equipment that can measure very small electrical signals from the heart and interpret them into graphical form on a print-out.

Relaxing is the most important part of the test, as moving or tensing your muscles can interfere with the recording making it difficult to interpret. Once you are relaxed, a recording of your heart rhythm (ECG) will be taken.

### What do I feel during the test?

You will not feel anything during this test.

### After the test

You will be asked to get dressed and you will be able to go home. In some cases you may be asked to wait, whilst the images are reviewed by a doctor.

### When will I get the results?

The heart trace will be reviewed and reported on by a cardiographer or doctor within 48 hours. The report will then be forwarded to the requesting physician i.e. your consultant or GP, who will write to you in due course.

### Contact details

You will be able to ask any questions or tell us any concerns before the test is carried out but if you would like to contact us before your appointment please call us on

Tel: 0121 507 6295 - Birmingham Treatment Centre

Tel: 0121 507 3512 - Sandwell General Hospital

Monday to Friday, 9:00am – 4:00pm

### Suggestions

In order to continually improve our service we welcome your feedback and suggestions. We would be grateful if you would complete our Friends and Family survey at the end of your appointment.

### Complaints

If you have any complaints about the treatment you have received, please ask at reception to see the Head of Department. Alternatively you can contact, Informal Concern or the complaints department.

### Informal Concern

Telephone: 0121 507 5836

Lines open: 10am till 4pm

# 12 Lead Electrocardiogram Test (ECG)

Information and advice for patients

## Cardiology Diagnostics

Monday to Friday

Email: [swb-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.pals@nhs.net)

### Complaints

Telephone: 0121 507 4080 or

0121 507 5892 or 0121 507 6440

Lines open: 10am till 4pm

Monday to Friday

Email: [swbh.complaints@nhs.net](mailto:swbh.complaints@nhs.net)

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our website [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk), follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

National Health Service. (2018). *Electrocardiogram (ECG)*. Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/electrocardiogram/> [Accessed 23 March 2023]

Campbell B, Richley D, Ross C and Eggett CJ. (2017). Clinical Guidelines by Consensus: Recording a standard 12-lead electrocardiogram. An approved method by the Society for Cardiological Science and Technology (SCST). Available at: <https://scst.org.uk/standards-guidance/> [Accessed 23 March 2023]



Number: 10488



If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact SWB Library Services on ext 3587 or email [swbh.library@nhs.net](mailto:swbh.library@nhs.net).



A Teaching Trust of The University of Birmingham  
Incorporating City, Sandwell and Rowley Regis Hospitals  
© Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust

ML6066

Issue Date: May 2023

Review Date: May 2026