

# Ambulatory Electrocardiogram (ECG) Test

Information and advice for patients

## Cardiology Diagnostics

### What is an Ambulatory Electrocardiogram?

An ambulatory ECG test is a machine consisting of a very small ECG recorder connected to 3 ECG cables. It is "worn" on your body for a set period of time. This could be between 24 hours and seven days and will be decided on by your consultant or GP.

### What is the benefit of the test?

You have probably had a 12 lead electrocardiogram (ECG) before. Since this test doesn't always pick up abnormalities that can occur if and when you have any symptoms, the ambulatory ECG allows your doctor to see whether there are changes in the heart's rhythm or rate over a longer period of time. It is often done to evaluate symptoms that occur occasionally, such as palpitations, irregular heartbeats, dizziness or blackouts. It can also be used to look at pacemaker function, or to assess medication.

### What are the risks of the test?

There are no risks although you might find it a little uncomfortable wearing the monitor for a period of time and in some instances patients may be sensitive to the electrodes used. You will be asked before the test if you have any skin allergies in this instance hypoallergenic electrodes will be used.

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

If you choose not to have the ambulatory electrocardiogram 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, oil or ointments to the chest area on 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

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### During the test

This procedure should take approximately 15 minutes. However, times may vary.

A cardiographer or cardiac physiologist (they can be either male or female members of staff) will ask you to undress to the waist. They will rub 3 small patches of skin on your chest with an alcohol wipe and an abrasive pad in order to ensure 3 small sticky tabs called electrodes will stick to your skin for this prolonged period of time. In some instances patients may need small areas of their chest shaved. ECG cables from the small ECG recorder will be connected to the electrodes on the skin. Additional tape will be used to secure the electrodes if necessary. The ECG recorder will be attached to a cord which will be secured around neck.

The machine will then be set to start recording your ECG continuously for the requested period of time. Advice will be given with regards to the best position of the recorder for comfort especially when sleeping.

At this point you will be free to leave the department.

### What do I feel during the test?

You will not feel anything during this test.

You may feel some discomfort when you remove the electrodes.

You will be given a patient information sheet/diary, where you will be asked to record your daily activities, sleeping patterns, and symptoms. You will be asked to press the patient event button on the monitor when experiencing symptoms. Whilst wearing the machine, try to do your normal daily activities as much as possible because the doctor will want to see what happens to your ECG on a typical day. Please note if you are wearing this monitor for 24 to 48 hours you will not be able to take a bath or shower during the test. Patient wearing the monitor for longer periods than this will be able to shower/bathe and will be given replacement electrodes.

### After the test

We will ask you to return the equipment and diary to us on a specified day. The staff will advise you how to return the equipment.

### When will I get the results?

You will not get the results straight after the test as we need time to analyse them. A full report will be sent to the doctor who referred you for the test after approximately 3 weeks and they will contact or write to you with the results.

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### 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 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 websites [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).

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### 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)



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