

Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)

Overview	<p>An electrocardiogram, often called an ECG or EKG, provides valuable information about your heart and about how well it is working. An ECG accurately records your heart rate and irregularities in your heartbeat.</p> <p>It may also reveal a lack of blood flow to the heart muscle (ischemia), if you are having a myocardial infarction (heart attack), and/or the effects of medication(s).</p>
Before the ECG	<p>There are no restrictions for food or fluids before the exam. It is best to avoid drinking cold water or exercising immediately before the test. They may significantly increase your heart rate.</p> <p>Before your exam, a technician will ask you to undress from the waist up (women will also be asked to remove pantyhose) and you will be given a gown to wear.</p> <p>Soft pads containing electrodes will be attached to your arms, legs, and chest. A clear jelly may be applied to your skin to help amplify the signal.</p> <p>The standard number of leads attached is 12 to 15 for a diagnostic ECG but may be as few as 3 to 5 for a monitoring procedure.</p>
During the ECG	<p>Relax and breathe normally. The entire process is painless and takes approximately 10 minutes. There is no danger of electrical shock. You may talk during the ECG, but you must lie still to get the most accurate reading.</p>
After the ECG	<p>You may return home and resume your normal activities. There are no side effects from the test.</p>