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## WHAT TO EXPECT- HAVING AN ECG / HEART TRACING

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This leaflet will give you more information about having an electrocardiogram (ECG) at the practice.

The test will be explained in more detail to you during your appointment, but if you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of the team.

### Having an electrocardiogram (ECG)

An ECG is a quick, safe, and painless test which records the rhythm, rate, and electrical activity of your heart.

Your doctor may refer you for an ECG as part of a general health check or if they suspect you have a heart condition.

An ECG can be used to help diagnose and monitor conditions affecting the heart, such as:

- *arrhythmias* – where the heart beats too slowly, too quickly, or irregularly
- *coronary heart disease* – where the heart's blood supply is blocked or interrupted by a build-up of fatty substances
- *heart attacks* – where the supply of blood to the heart is suddenly blocked
- *cardiomyopathy* – where the heart walls become thickened or enlarged.

An ECG is usually one of the first tests you will have to check for heart problems. However, it does have some limitations, so you may need to have additional tests to confirm a diagnosis.

## Preparing for your test

If your chest is particularly hairy then the person doing the ECG test may need to shave some areas of your chest so that the small, sticky patches (electrodes) to stick to your skin properly. You may wish complete this in advance of your appointment. You can eat and drink as normal before the test. No other specific preparations are necessary.

## At the appointment

You will be asked to remove all your clothing from your waist up (this may include a bra, if you are wearing one, although sometimes we can work around this if necessary).

Electrodes will then be placed on your chest, wrists, and ankles. These electrodes will detect the electrical signals produced by your heart. The signals will be recorded and converted by an ECG machine into a graph, which will either be displayed electronically, on the computer screen, or printed out on paper. The ECG recording will then be reviewed by your doctor to check for any unusual activity.

During the test, you will need to lie as still as possible, as any sudden movements will make it hard to get a good quality recording.

You may request to have a chaperone present during your ECG. If you would like a chaperone (and if you wish to specifically request a male or female chaperone), please speak to a member of our team before your appointment.

An ECG usually takes between around ten minutes. If you feel well, you will usually be able to go home straight after the test.

## Your results

If you have symptoms or your ECG was requested urgently you may be asked to wait while the Duty GP reviews your ECG. If you are feeling well and your ECG was requested routinely then you can go home after your appointment and we will send your results to the GP who requested the test. Your GP will then be in touch should further action or investigation be required.

## Useful links

- British heart foundation - <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/tests/ecg>
- Patient UK - [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)
- NHS Choices, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/electrocardiogram/>

## ***If you have further questions:***

Call the **practice** on *01285 653184 or 01285 653122*

If you require **urgent** medical advice, call *111 (24 Hrs)*

In an **emergency** call **999**