

What is an ECG/EKG (Electrocardiogram)?

"All right, the test has started. Breathe normally."

An electrocardiogram—also called an ECG or EKG—is a test that measures your heart's electrical activity which is what causes the heart muscle to squeeze and pump blood. An ECG records the timing and strength of these impulses to show if your heart is beating too fast, too slow, or abnormally. It can also tell if your heart is working too hard.

"So, if you're having chest discomfort, dizziness, fast heartbeat, palpitations, or many other symptoms associated with the heart, an EKG is a good first test to see where this is coming from."-Dr. Rajiv Chandra, MD, Cardiologist

Before the test, tell your provider about any drugs or supplements you take. They could affect your results. When you arrive for the test, you'll remove your clothes from the waist up and change into a gown.

"Go ahead and lie back for me."

Then, you'll lie on a table or hospital bed. The technician will attach sticky patches called electrodes to your chest, arms, and legs. If you have a lot of hair it may be clipped or shaved to help the patches stick.

"The electrodes are attached to a computer that records your electrical impulses. And those impulses will show up as waves on the monitor or a printout."-Amy Carter, EKG Technician

The test takes about 5 to 10 minutes. Afterward, the technician will remove the electrodes and you can go home.

"So, if your test is negative, which means it came back benign, it probably is either not your heart, or your doctor needs to do other testing to see what it is. If the test comes back positive, which means there is a problem with your heart, your doctor will then explain to you what the next step is, and how best to treat it."- Dr. Rajiv Chandra, MD, Cardiologist