

Electrocardiogram (EKG) for Children

An electrocardiogram— also called an EKG or ECG— is a test that checks for problems with the electrical activity in your child's heart.

It shows the heart's electrical activity by tracing lines onto a paper with a machine. The test is one way a doctor can see how healthy your child's heart is.

Before the test, tell your child's doctor about any prescription or nonprescription medicines your child is taking. They can affect the test. And don't put any creams or lotions on your child's skin on the day of the test.

If the test is scheduled ahead of time, your child may want to bring something comforting to hold during the test, like a small blanket.

Here's how the test is done.

Your child will remove any jewelry and take off their shirt. They may change into a hospital gown or scrubs. You'll probably be able to stay in the room with your child during the test.

Your child will lie down on a bed or table. Areas on your child's arms, legs, and chest will be cleaned.

Small, sticky pads called electrodes will be placed on your child's arms, legs, and chest. They're connected to an EKG machine, which traces the heart's activity onto paper.

Your child will be asked to hold still during the test, which usually takes about 5 to 10 minutes. Your child will probably be able to go home right after the test and get back to their usual activities.

An electrocardiogram doesn't cause any pain. No electricity passes through your child's body, and there's no risk of an electrical shock.

But the test can seem a little scary, especially for younger kids. So it might be a good idea to talk to your child about what to expect, and to remind them that the test won't hurt.

And if you and your child have any questions about the test, you can always talk to your doctor.