

Electrocardiogram (ECG)

Definition:

An electrocardiogram (ECG) is a test that records the electrical activity of the heart. It is used to measure the rate and regularity of your heartbeat. Also it measures the size and position of the heart chambers and presence of any heart disease. It can also be used to monitor the effects of drugs or devices used to help regulate your heart.

Preparation for the test:

There is no preparation for the test. However, exercise (like climbing the stairs) immediately before the test may increase your heart rate. Also ingestion of cold water immediately before the test may produce changes in one of the waveforms recorded. You may be asked to remove jewelry before the test

The Test:

The ECG test is a painless test. Before the test you will be asked if you are taking any medications. You will then be asked to put on a gown and lie down on an exam table. Electrodes are placed on your arms, legs and chest. Occasionally it is necessary to shave or clip hair on your chest so the electrodes will have good contact. You must remain still during the test and may be asked to hold your breath for short periods of time. The results are recorded on graph paper and read by your doctor.

Results:

Normal values indicate your heart rate is normal and your rhythm is consistent and even. Abnormal result could indicate many things and will need to be discussed further with your doctor.

Contact Information:

Memphis Heart Clinic
901-818-0300

Adapted from “ECG” which was reviewed by Glenn Gandelman, MD, MPH, Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine, New York Medical College, Valhalla, , NY. Review provided by Verimed Healthcare Network. Copyright 2007 A.D.A.M.