

# Electrocardiogram (ECG)

## Cardiology Department Patient Information Leaflet

### Introduction

You have been given this leaflet as your GP or hospital consultant has suggested you would benefit from having an electrocardiogram (ECG). This leaflet gives more information on what this involves.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Cardiology Department.

### What is an ECG?

An ECG is the most common heart test performed.

It is a recording of the electrical signals your heart generates as it beats. These signals should travel through the heart along special pathways, instructing the heart muscles how to beat correctly. The presence of these signals can be detected on the surface of your skin by an ECG machine. The machine does this through small sticky electrodes attached to wires that are put onto the skin on your chest. An ECG is a quick, safe and painless test.

The ECG machine records these signals over a period of time and plots them onto a graph. The shape of the recording can help the doctor see if your heart has a problem or is beating normally.

## What are the benefits?

ECGs are performed for many reasons. Your doctor may already have told you why they are recommending that you have an ECG. The five most common benefits of recording an electrocardiogram are as follows:

- To help diagnose the cause of chest pain.
- To find out more about the rhythm of the heart.
- To investigate if someone has a heart murmur.
- To examine the heart in someone who has high blood pressure.
- For reassurance in someone who is worried they have a heart problem.

## What are the risks?

The test is very safe and does not have side effects.

## Are there any alternatives to this test?

This may be one of a number of tests suggested to diagnose your condition. It is your choice as to whether you have the test.

## How do I prepare for the test?

This is no special preparation for the test. You can eat and drink as normal before it.

## What happens during the test?

The cardiac physiologist will ask you to undress to your waist and then lie on the bed. They will put sticky ECG electrodes on your chest. Females will need to remove their bra if they wear one and males may need a little hair removed to allow the stickers to stick. Once the electrodes are connected to the ECG machine you will be covered up. The ECG machine will record your heart beat for a specified time then print it out.

**Important: it is normal to have this procedure carried out on your own. However, if you need someone to help you dress, understand the instructions given or simply because you feel nervous, tell the receptionist when you arrive for the test.**

## How long does it take?

Once you have been connected to the ECG machine the actual test will usually only take a few minutes.

## What happens after the test?

You can go home and continue with your normal activities.

## How do I get the results?

We will send your report back to your GP or hospital consultant who asked for the test. They will be in touch with you to discuss the results.

## Can I find out more?

You can find out more from the following weblink:

### **NHS Choices**

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/electrocardiogram/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

The Cardiology Department on 01384 456111 ext. 3582  
(9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/cardiology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet,  
please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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