

Electrocardiogram (ECG)

What is an ECG?

An ECG (which stands for electrocardiogram) measures the electrical pulses that trigger your heartbeat. The pulses are recorded by electrodes that stick to your chest and send signals to a machine called an electrocardiograph, which displays the results as a continuous wavy line with a series of spikes.

Your doctor is able to analyse the pattern and identify any problems.

Why would I need an ECG?

An ECG provides valuable information regarding the structure and function of your heart. Your doctor may recommend an ECG in order to:

- Diagnose irregular heart rhythm (arrhythmias)
- Identify any structural problems with your heart's chambers
- See how effective any previous heart surgery has been
- Determine if you have coronary artery disease

What happens during an ECG?

During an ECG recording, you will be asked to lie on your back on a bed with your chest exposed. Electrodes will be placed on your arms and chest and will be connected via cables to a recording device. The device will record a series of heart beats and provide a printout for analysis.

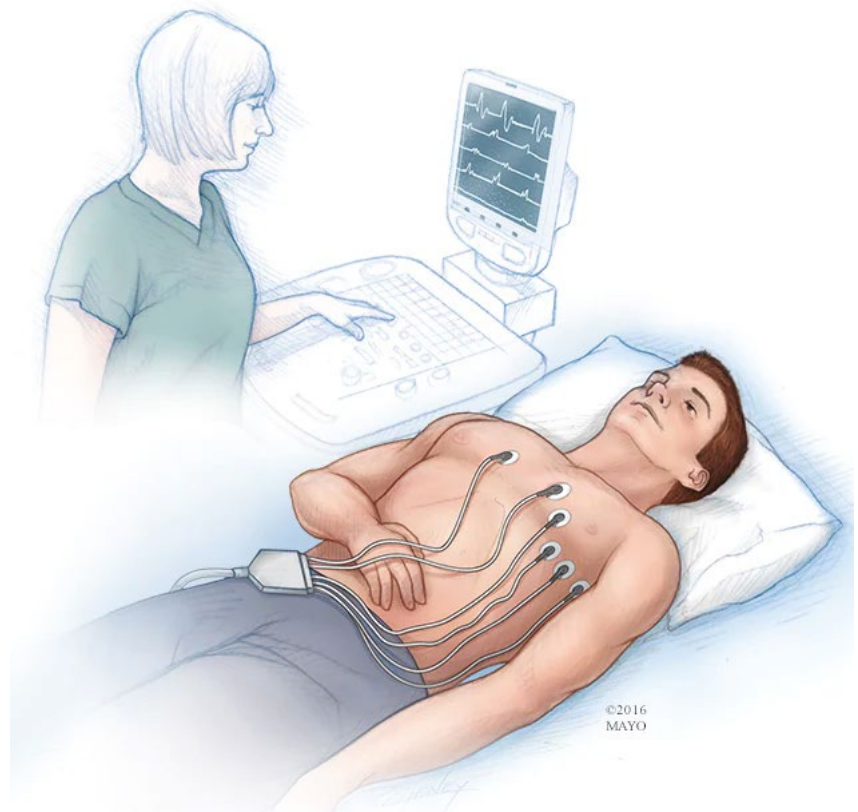
The test only takes a few minutes.

How do I prepare for an ECG?

There is no specific preparation required for an ECG.

What are the risks with an ECG?

An ECG is a completely safe test. You may experience very minor skin discomfort when the electrodes are removed.



©MAYO FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.