



## Welcome Sheet

# Having an Electrocardiogram (EKG)

## What is an Electrocardiogram (EKG)?

An electrocardiogram, also known as an EKG, is a non-invasive test to evaluate the electrical activity of your heart. The EKG records heart rhythms. Your doctor diagnoses heart problems or conditions by reading patterns of heartbeats and wave forms seen on an EKG. This test takes about 5-10 minutes to complete.

### An EKG shows:

- abnormal heartbeats and rhythms (arrhythmias)
- evidence of a current heart attack and the effects of old heart attacks
- thickening of the heart muscle caused by high blood pressure or other diseases
- parts of the heart that are not getting enough blood supply
- evidence of chemical imbalances within the body

## What Do I Need to Know Before the EKG Test?

- **Take your regular medications prior to the test.**
- **Wear a loose-fitting shirt or blouse to the EKG test:** You will be asked to undress from the waist up for this procedure.
- **If you are a patient in the hospital,** an EKG technician performs the test at the bedside.
- **If you are coming from home, you may drop-in. No appointment is necessary.**
- **Bring your requisition form:** Your doctor signs a requisition form for your test. Please bring this form with you.

## During Your EKG Test

- The technician explains the procedure.
- Sometimes, body hair may prevent proper EKG signal recording. The technician may shave a small area in order to place the electrodes.
- Then, the technician places electrodes on your arms, legs, and chest.
- You are encouraged to lie quietly without moving during this test.
- EKG is a completely painless test. You will not feel any discomfort.

## After Your EKG Test

- **Return to Your Normal Activities:** You may go home and return to your normal activities after the test.
- **EKG Test Results are Mailed or Faxed to Your Doctor:** The results are mailed directly to your primary doctor and to your cardiologist (if you have one).
- **Your doctor will discuss the need for further testing, if indicated.**

## More Ways to Learn

Visit the American Heart Association Web site at [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Question: What is an electrocardiogram (EKG)?**

Answer: An EKG is a recording of the electrical activity of your heart.

**Question: How long will the test take?**

Answer: An EKG takes about 5-10 minutes to complete.

**Question: Will I feel any discomfort with an EKG test?**

Answer: You will not feel any discomfort. An EKG is a completely painless test.

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Produced by the Center for Patient and Community Education in association with the Department of Non-Invasive Cardiology at California Pacific Medical Center. This education material is adapted for use by physicians and staff at Sutter Health affiliate hospitals from California Pacific Medical Center's learning resources. Last updated: 8/04.

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Funded by a generous donation from the Mr. and Mrs. Arthur A. Ciocca Foundation.

Note: This information is not meant to replace any information or personal medical advice which you get directly from your doctor(s). If you have any questions about this information, such as the risks or benefits of the treatment listed, please ask your doctor(s).