

Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)

The Electrocardiogram is used worldwide as a simple way of diagnosing heart conditions.

What Is an ECG? An Electrocardiogram, also called an EKG or ECG, is a test that measures the electrical activity of the heartbeat. Whenever your heart beats, an electrical impulse (or “wave”) travels through the heart. This wave causes your heart muscle to squeeze and pump blood around your body.

Why Might I Need an ECG? ECGs are usually done to see if your heart has problems. The results commonly show:

- How fast your heart is beating
- Whether your heart is beating properly
- The size of your heart
- Possible infection
- New or old injuries to your heart muscle

The test results can give your doctor valuable information about your heart to help make the right treatment choices.

What to Expect

The ECG is a painless, simple test that takes 5 to 10 minutes.

- You lie on a bed or examination table.
- Several sticker sensors called electrodes are placed on the skin of your arms, legs, and chest. They can be cold at first.
- The electrodes are connected to wires called leads, which are connected to the ECG machine.
- The electrical activity of the heart is then recorded on a moving strip of paper in the ECG machine.

What Does It Show? If your ECG is abnormal, it can mean that your heart may have a problem that needs to be treated. However, 9 out of 10 people with an abnormal ECG do not develop heart trouble. If you have a normal ECG it does not necessarily mean that your heart is fine. But your doctor can use the information to make sure you do not have certain heart problems.

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What Does It Show? If you have an abnormal ECG or certain other heart problems, your doctor may ask you to take another test. An Exercise Tolerance Test measures your heart's activity during exercise.
(Continued)

Resources Organizations

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario

Web site: www.heartandstroke.on.ca

Belleville Office: Supporting Prince Edward, Hastings, Marmora, Quinte East, Trenton, Tweed, Madoc, Bancroft & Marmora Lake

121 Dundas Street East, Suite 106A

Belleville, Ontario K8N 1C3

Telephone (613) 962-2502

Fax (613) 962-6080

Brockville Office: Supporting Perth & Lanark Area, Gananoque, Leeds West, Kemptville-Grenville North, Smiths Falls

51 King Street East, Suite 310

Brockville, Ontario K6V 1A8

Telephone (613) 345-6183

Fax (613) 345-3037

Cornwall Office: Supporting Stormont, Prescott-Russell, Dundas & Glengarry

36 Second Street East

Cornwall, Ontario K6H 1Y3

Telephone (613) 938-8933

Fax (613) 938-0655

Kingston Office: Supporting Frontenac, Lennox-Addington

720 Progress Avenue

Kingston, Ontario K7M 4W9

Telephone (613) 384-2871

Fax (613) 384-2899

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