

Electrocardiogram (EKG)

What is an electrocardiogram (EKG)?

An EKG is a test that shows the electrical activity of your child's heart. This is called the heart rhythm. This test tells your child's doctor if the heart is beating the right way.

How do I prepare my child for the test?

Talk with your child's doctor or nurse about special care for your child. Here are some things to plan for your child:

Babies

- You can help your baby feel less scared during the test by bringing a special blanket, toy or pacifier.

Toddlers and preschoolers

- Young children remember things for only a short time. The best time to talk about the test is right before it is time to leave for the hospital.
- Tell your child they will have some special pictures taken of the heart. Use simple words.
- Tell your child the test should not hurt but they can help by lying very still.
- Tell your child you will be able to stay with them.
- Bring a favorite book, toy, blanket or snack.

School-age children

- It is important to be honest with school-age children. They may think something worse than what is really going to happen.
- Tell your child they will be going to the hospital to have a special test. You can tell them on the day of the test.
- Explain that the test will help their doctor know how their heart is working. Use simple words and try to tell them exactly what will happen.
- Tell your child the test should not hurt but they can help by lying very still.
- Bring a favorite book, toy, game or snack.

What happens during the test?

- An EKG takes about 15 minutes and will not hurt your child. It is best for 1 parent to stay with your child and help them during the test.
- Your child will lie on a bed with their shirt off.
- Tell the EKG tech if your child is allergic to tape.
- The tech will:
 - Place small, sticky patches called electrodes on your child's chest, arms and legs.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Electrocardiogram (EKG), continued

- Connect the electrodes to the EKG wires.
- Your child must lie still for about 1 minute.
- Your child will not feel anything while the machine is working.
- The machine will print out a picture of your child's heart rhythm.

What happens after the test?

The tech will:

- Remove the electrodes from your child's skin.
- Tell you when you may leave.

When will I get the results?

Your child's EKG results will be sent to a heart doctor called a cardiologist. Your child's doctor will call or send the test results to you.

Does my child need follow-up care?

Talk with your child's doctor about when they need to see your child again.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

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