

An electrocardiogram or EKG is a heart test that makes a recording of the electrical activity of your heart. This electrical activity helps set your heart's rate and rhythm. It can help providers see if you have heart muscle damage or electrical problems in the heart.

Why is an Electrocardiogram Performed?

The test is used to measure:

- Any damage to the heart
- How fast your heart is beating and whether it is beating normally
- The size and position of your heart chambers
- The effects of drugs or devices used to control the heart such as a pacemaker

Your provider may order this test if:

- You have chest pain or palpitations
- You are scheduled for surgery
- You have had heart problems in the past
- You have a family history of heart disease

How to prepare for an EKG

Make sure your provider knows about any medications you are taking, as some can interfere with the test results. The day of your test do not put any lotions, oils, or powders on your chest.

How is an electrocardiogram performed?

During the test, you will lie down then several sticky patches called electrodes will be placed on your arms, chest, and legs to check the heart rate, rhythm, and electrical activity of your heart. The electrodes will be connected to a machine that will record the electrical activity of your heart. You will be asked to relax, lie still and breathe normally while the electrodes record information onto a moving strip of paper. The test is painless, no electricity is sent through the body and only takes a few minutes to complete.