Ambulatory ECG monitoring

Information for patients
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals
What is ambulatory ECG monitoring?

An electrocardiogram (ECG) is a simple test which records the rhythm and electrical activity of your heart. An ambulatory ECG monitor is a type of ECG that records your heart rhythm over a longer period of time. This may be useful if your symptoms happen infrequently.

What can an ambulatory ECG monitor show?

An ambulatory ECG monitor can help to detect abnormal heart rhythms that may cause symptoms such as palpitation, dizziness, shortness of breath or blackouts.

How long will it take?

Your ambulatory ECG monitor will take 5-10 minutes to fit. You will be asked to continue wearing it for 24 hours. Your doctor may have requested that you wear the monitor for a longer period, in which case you will be asked to leave the monitor attached for up to 1 week.

What happens during the fitment of an ambulatory ECG monitor?

You will be asked to undress from the waist upwards, ladies may keep their bras on. Small sticky patches called electrodes will be attached to your chest and these will be connected to a small monitor. It may be necessary to remove a small amount of hair from the chest to ensure the electrodes stick to the skin. The monitor can then be clipped onto your clothing and secured in place.

What do I need to do to prepare?

You should wear loose fitting clothing such as a T-shirt, blouse or shirt that unbuttons down the middle. This will allow the cardiographer to easily apply the electrodes to your chest.
Who will fit my ambulatory ECG monitor?

Your ECG will be performed by a cardiographer who has been trained to perform the investigation. The cardiographer may be male or female. If you would prefer a cardiographer of the same gender as yourself please contact the department before attending. Alternatively you can bring a family member or friend, or let the staff in the department know once you arrive and a formal chaperone can be arranged.

You will not normally be seen by a doctor.

What should I do whilst wearing the monitor?

You will be asked to carry on with your normal activities whilst wearing the monitor. However, you will not be able to have a bath or shower as the monitors are not waterproof. You may be given a diary card to document any symptoms you may experience. When doing this, please record the time, what you were doing and what the symptoms were. Please use the time on the front of the monitor.

When should I return the monitor?

You will be asked to return the monitor to the department by a certain time after the recording period has ended. The cardiographer will let you know exactly when you should return it. Please ensure you have returned it by this time as failing to do so will mean another patient may have their appointment cancelled. The monitor can be returned by a family member or friend if you are unable to do so. If believe you may have a problem returning the monitor please contact the department before you attend.

Is the test safe?

Yes, the monitor only records the activity coming from your heart. The electrodes are sticky and removal of these may be uncomfortable and leave a small red mark. This is normal and should fade after a few
minutes. If you have sensitive skin the electrodes may irritate it. If your skin is prone to irritation, please let the cardiographer know and they can apply hypo allergenic electrodes to minimise this. If you have any lasting problems please contact the department.

**When will I get my results?**

The results will be sent to your GP or hospital consultant, depending upon who has requested the test. They are then responsible for explaining the test results to you.

**Can I ask any questions?**

Yes, the cardiographer will be able to answer any questions related to the test. However, they will not be able to answer any medical or medication related questions.

**Where can I find out more information?**

If you would like more information you can contact the department on **0114 271 4315** and they will be happy to answer any questions.

There are also several organisations that are available to help and inform people about cardiac conditions. These include:

**British Heart Foundation**

0300 330 3322       www.bhf.org.uk

**Arrhythmia Alliance**

01789 450787        www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk

Alternative formats can be available on request.
Please email: alternativeformats@sth.nhs.uk