Electrocardiogram (EKG)

An electrocardiogram is also known as an EKG or ECG. An EKG records the electrical impulses of the heart and is an important test to assess heart health. It provides insight regarding your heart rhythm, heart size, heart function and can can provide information as to whether you have had a heart attack. An EKG may be part of a routine physical exam and is done if you have experienced chest pain.

PROCEDURE

- You will be asked to remove your clothes from the waist up, wear a hospital gown and lie down on your back for the test.
- Electrodes or sticky patches are placed on your arms, legs and chest.
- The electrodes are attached by wires to an EKG machine which records the electrical activity of your heart.
- You will be asked to relax and lie still for a few seconds.
- The EKG test is simple, safe and painless. It takes only a few minutes to perform the test. You cannot be shocked by the machine and no electricity goes through your body.

AFTER THE EKG

- If the EKG was part of a routine physical exam, you may return to normal activities as told by your caregiver.
- If the EKG was done to evaluate chest pain, you may need additional testing as determined by your caregiver for your safety.
- Your doctor or a specially trained heart doctor (*Cardiologist*) will read the EKG results.
- Not all test results are available during your visit. If your test results are not back during the visit, make an appointment with your caregiver to find out the results. Do not assume everything is normal if you have not heard from your caregiver or the medical facility. It is important for you to follow up on all of your test results.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF

- You have severe chest discomfort, especially if the pain is crushing or pressure-like and spreads to the arms, back, neck, or jaw. **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY.** Do not wait to see if the pain will go away. **Get medical help at once.** Call emergency services (911 in U.S.). DO NOT drive yourself to the hospital.
- You are sweating, feel sick to your stomach(*nausea*), or short of breath.
- You have chest pain that does not get better after rest or taking your usual medicine.
- You wake from sleep with chest pain.
- You feel dizzy, faint or experience profound fatigue.

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