Electrocardiogram
(EKG)

WHAT IS AN ELECTROCARDIOGRAM?

An electrocardiogram is also called an EKG or ECG. It is a simple, safe and painless test used to check the heart. An EKG looks at your heart beat, heart size, and can check to see if you have had a heart attack. No electricity will flow into your body during the test.

WHO DOES THE EKG?

- A person specially trained to do EKG's will perform the test.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME DURING THE EKG?

- You will be asked to remove your clothes from the waist up, wear a hospital gown and lie down on your back.
- Small, cold pads (like round stickers) called electrodes will be placed on your arms, legs, and chest. The electrodes are attached to wires that go to an EKG machine. The EKG machine records the electrical activity of your heart.
- You will be asked to relax and lie very still for a few seconds.
  - If you are not still and relaxed, the EKG may need to be repeated to get the best possible results.

HOW LONG DOES THE EKG LAST?

The EKG does not take very long and only takes a few minutes to do.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE TEST?

- If the EKG was done as part of a routine exam, you can go back to your normal activity as told by your doctor.
- If the EKG was done because you were having chest pain, you may need to have more testing for your safety.

WHEN DO I GET THE RESULTS?

- Your doctor or a specially trained heart doctor (cardiologist) will look at your EKG results.
- It is important for you to follow-up on all of your test results.

GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF:

- You have bad chest pain. This is especially true 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 right away.** Call emergency services (911 in U.S.). **Do not** drive yourself to the hospital.
- You have sweating, feel sick to your stomach (*nausea*) or have a hard time breathing.
- Your chest pain gets worse and does not get better after taking medicine.
- You feel faint or weak.

Document Released: 11/30/2009
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.