



## What is Electrocardiogram (ECG)?

An electrocardiogram (ECG) is a simple test that can be used to check your heart's rhythm and electrical activity.

- Sensors attached to the skin are used to detect the electrical signals produced by your heart each time it beats.
- These signals are recorded by a machine and are looked at by a doctor to see if they're unusual.
- An ECG may be requested by a heart specialist (cardiologist) or any doctor who thinks you might have a problem with your heart, including your GP.
- The test can be carried out by a specially trained healthcare professional at a hospital, a clinic or at your GP surgery.
- Despite having a similar name, an ECG isn't the same as an echocardiogram, which is a scan of the heart.

## When an ECG is used?

An ECG is often used alongside other tests to help diagnose and monitor conditions affecting the heart.

It can be used to investigate symptoms of a possible heart problem, such as chest pain, palpitations (suddenly noticeable heartbeats), dizziness and shortness of breath.

## An ECG can help detect:

- **Arrhythmias** – where the heart beats too slowly, too quickly, or irregularly
- **Coronary heart disease** – where the heart's blood supply is blocked or interrupted by a build-up of fatty substances
- **Heart attacks** – where the supply of blood to the heart is suddenly blocked
- **Cardiomyopathy** – where the heart walls become thickened or enlarged

A series of ECGs can also be taken over time to monitor a person already diagnosed with a heart condition or taking medication known to potentially affect the heart.