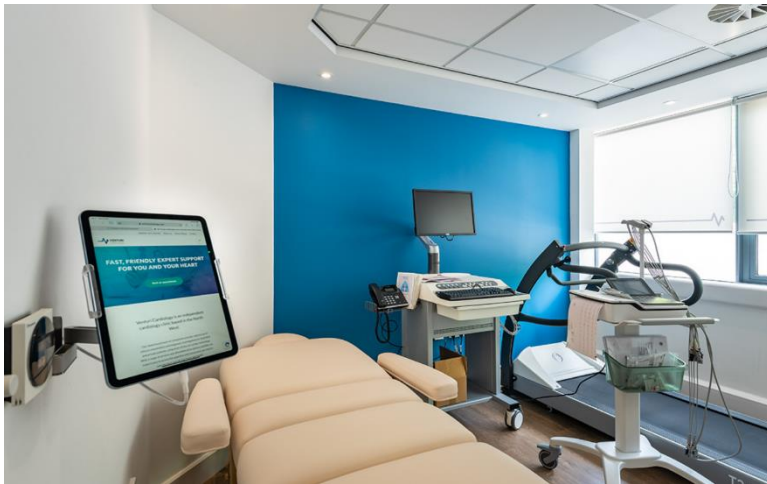


Electrocardiogram (ECG)



What is an Electrocardiogram (ECG)?

An electrocardiogram, or ECG, looks at your heart's rate, rhythm, and electrical activity. Ten small electrodes are put on your arms, legs, and chest. These are connected by wires to an ECG machine which picks up the electrical signals that make your heartbeat. This electrical activity is recorded and printed onto paper. The consultant will ask you to undress from the waist upwards.

Why would you have an ECG?

An ECG is one of the most common heart tests. It is the only way of uncovering certain problems with the heart's electrical impulses. There are several reasons why someone may have an ECG, including an irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath when they exert themselves, significantly high blood pressure, palpitations or a suspected heart valve problem. It can also be a useful way of ruling out problems. If your doctor recommends an ECG, think of it as a basic investigation.



What equipment do we use?

The ECG equipment involves 10 electrodes used to record 12 different views of your heart's electrical activity. You do not need to do anything to prepare for it. An electrode is attached to each ankle and wrist with sticky pads and six more are attached to the chest. The patient lies almost flat with the head and chest raised a little. Relaxing for a few minutes before the recording is made is important, as this allows the electrode connections to stabilise and means the ECG will be more reliable. During this time, your details can be recorded on the ECG machine.

What are the risks of an ECG?

Very rarely someone may have a slight skin reaction to the electrodes, but normally there are no aftereffects.

How long will an ECG take?

The whole test takes a few minutes and is completely painless. You will need to lie still as moving can affect the results.

Preparing for your ECG

There is no need to prepare for an ECG.