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HOLTER MONITOR

HOLTER MONITOR (24-72 HOUR ECG)

The Holter Monitor is a device that measures and records heart rhythm over 1-3 days. This test may be done when an ECG does not show the arrhythmia and it still is suspected to be the cause of symptoms. Patches with wires are placed on the chest. The wires are connected to a portable monitor that can be attached to a purse or belt.

During your Holter monitoring, your physician will be looking at a number of factors in order to get an overall picture of how your heart is functioning. Often, abnormalities do not occur during the brief time that a standard electrocardiogram (ECG) is done. A Holter monitor records ECG information over an extended period of time in order to “capture” and then diagnose abnormal heart rhythms that may occur as you go about your daily routine.

Your monitor will help assess recurring symptoms such as dizziness, fainting, and palpitations (rapid heart beat) to determine whether they are caused by an abnormal rhythm. It may also show whether or not certain areas of the heart muscle are receiving adequate blood supply, and will help your physician evaluate the effectiveness of medications or pacemakers that help control heart rhythms.



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PREPARATION FOR HOLTER MONITOR

We will arrange to apply your monitor either at the hospital or in our office. You won't need to do anything to prepare, however it's a good idea to wear a blouse or shirt that fits loosely and buttons in the front.

First, several areas on your chest will be shaved (if necessary) and cleaned. Then the Holter monitor—a small, portable tape recorder—will be strapped to your body. Several electrodes (small, sticky pads) will be placed on your chest and connected by wires to the recorder. The staff will check the system before you leave to make sure it's working properly. You'll be given exact instructions about what you need to do in order to make this Holter monitoring accurate and worthwhile. If you have any questions about the monitor itself or about what you're supposed to do, be sure to ask before you leave with your monitor.

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PROCEDURE

During the 24 hours you are wearing the monitor, you should follow your usual daily routine. You'll be an important part of the monitoring study because—just as the Holter monitor is recording the activities of your heart—you'll be recording your routine activities and any symptoms that you are experiencing in a special diary. Together, these reports will give a detailed picture of what you do during a typical day and how your body reacts to each activity.

It's very important to make sure you record everything in your diary:

- ALL ACTIVITIES, such as walking, climbing stairs, bowel movements, sexual activity, emotional upsets, taking medications, etc.
- ALL SYMPTOMS, such as shortness of breath, dizziness, fainting, palpitations (fluttering sensations), or chest pains.
- START AND STOP TIMES of every activity and symptom.
- This constant diary-keeping may seem difficult at first, but if you keep the diary with you at all times, you'll be surprised at how fast you'll fall into a routine of quickly jotting down the important information.

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WHILE YOU'RE WEARING YOUR HOLTER MONITOR:

- Don't shower or take a bath, as the electrodes and recording equipment should not get wet.
- Try to sleep on your back with the recorder positioned at your side so the electrodes don't pull off.
- If the recorder light flashes, one of the electrodes or wires may be loose. Press on each electrode to make sure it has solid contact with your skin.
- Avoid electric blankets, magnets, metal detectors, and high-voltage areas (that may interfere with the

recording).

- If you use a microwave appliance, don't stand close to it during operation.

These instructions are given to make sure that the heart's activities are recorded accurately, and are not distorted or interfered with by anything. Holter monitoring is very safe, and there is no risk involved to you.

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YOUR RESULTS

You may remove the monitor and straps on your own before returning them to your physician's office or the monitoring company. Don't forget to bring your diary with you, as what you have written about your activity and symptoms are just as important as what the monitor has recorded about your heart's rhythm. The ECG recording will be played back and analyzed, along with the entries in your diary, with final test results usually available within a week. Your physician will discuss these results with you. Depending on what your study shows, more tests may need to be scheduled.

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HEALTH MAINTENANCE

Regardless of the results of your study and the course of treatment your physician recommends, you play an important role in staying healthy. Be sure to keep all appointments for exams and follow-up tests. Follow your instructions, don't hesitate to talk about your concerns, and immediately report any new symptoms.

As always, if you have any questions about your health, be sure to ask your physician.

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