EKG, ECG, or Electrocardiogram

What is an EKG?

Every time the heart beats, the muscle of the heart squeezes to pump blood through the body. Each heartbeat is started by a tiny burst of electricity, made in the heart. This burst is called an electrical impulse or wave. The wave travels through the muscle of the heart, and makes it beat.

EKG and ECG stand for electrocardiogram. An EKG measures the electrical waves of the heartbeat. It records these on a strip of paper, so the doctor can look at them.

Why is it done?

A doctor can look at an EKG record to see:

— how long the wave takes to pass through the heart. This shows if the electrical activity is normal or slow, fast, or irregular.

— if parts of the heart are too large or are overworked.

How is it done?

The waves are picked up by sensors called electrodes.

Your child will lie down, with no shirt. A nurse or technician will put electrodes on your child’s chest, arms, and legs.

The electrodes have wires (leads), which go to the EKG machine. The electrodes
sense the heart waves, and send the message through the wires to the EKG machine. The waves are recorded on a moving strip of paper.

While the EKG is recording, your child must lie quietly. This takes only 10 to 20 seconds. Young children may need help feeling safe during this test. You, or a nurse or technician can help your child stay still.

Can this test hurt my child?

No. The machine only measures the electrical waves in your child’s body. It does not send electricity into the body. The electrodes are soft, and they go on and pull off easily.

When will we know the results of this test?

The doctor will look at the strip of paper, and tell you what it says about your child’s heart.

Now that you’ve read this:

☐ Tell your nurse or doctor how you will get your child ready for this test. (Check when done.)

If you have any questions or concerns,

☐ call your child’s doctor or ☐ call ____________________________
If you want to know more about child health and illness, visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children’s Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-933-1400
866-933-6459
www.phoenixchildrens.org
www.theemilycenter.org
Facebook: facebook.com/theemilycenter
Twitter: @emilycenter
Pinterest: pinterest.com/emilycenter

Disclaimer
The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children’s Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.
Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.
Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read? ☐ Yes  ☐ No
Would you say this handout is easy to read?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No
Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading this handout?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No
If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any questions about the subject?  ☐ Yes  ☐ No
If yes, what?
Is there anything you don’t like about the drawings? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

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Thank you for helping us!