

## Patient information factsheet

# Ambulatory electrocardiogram (ECG) monitor Telephone appointment

We have given you this factsheet because your doctor has requested that you wear an ambulatory electrocardiogram (ECG) monitor to help assess your heart rate and rhythm. It explains what an ambulatory ECG monitor is and how to use your monitor at home.

We have arranged a telephone appointment for you with a member of our non-invasive cardiology team to discuss what this test involves in more detail, so you know exactly what to expect. This appointment is a good opportunity for you to ask us any questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns after your appointment, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

### What is an ambulatory ECG monitor?

An ambulatory ECG monitor is a small lightweight device that continuously records your heart's activity over an extended period as you go about your normal daily routine. It can be used to identify abnormal heart rates or rhythms, which may or may not be associated with symptoms. The monitor is attached to your chest via small stickers or a large sticky patch.

### Why do I need an ambulatory ECG?

Unlike a standard ECG, which only captures a short snapshot of your heart's rhythm, an ambulatory ECG provides more in-depth information about your heart rate and rhythm as the test is carried out over a longer period (up to 14 days). This helps us to detect irregular heartbeats or other rhythm issues, particularly if you have intermittent (on-and-off) symptoms (for example, palpitations, dizziness, or fainting spells).

### How will I receive the ambulatory ECG monitor?

You will be sent an ambulatory ECG monitor in the post by an external company (please note that the package is small enough to be posted through a letterbox). You, or a relative, friend or carer, will need to fit this monitor yourself at home. Once you have worn the monitor for the agreed length of time, you will then need to send the monitor back to the external company via the Post Office.

**If you feel you cannot fit the ambulatory ECG monitor yourself at home, we can fit this for you at the hospital. Please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet so we can arrange an appointment to fit this for you.**

### What will happen during the telephone appointment?

We will send you an appointment letter which will contain the date and time of your telephone appointment. The appointment usually takes around 20 minutes.

# Patient information factsheet

Please make sure you:

- are available 10 minutes before and after your appointment time to take the call
- have good telephone signal
- are somewhere quiet (this is so that you can hear the person calling and they can hear you)
- don't have a call blocking service on your phone

During the appointment, we will:

- discuss what ambulatory ECG monitoring involves
- explain how to fit and use your specific ECG monitor
- answer any questions you may have

We will also:

- check a number of details with you (including your name, date of birth, address and phone number).
- ask you if you consent to share your name, address, telephone number and reason for needing the test with the external company that will send you the ECG monitor (this company will also analyse the recording of your heart rhythm). If you do not wish to share this information with the external company, please discuss this with us.
- ask you if you have an MRI scan, X-ray or CT scan booked within the next two weeks. You cannot wear ambulatory ECG monitors during any of these procedures, so if you do have a procedure booked within the next two weeks, we may need to delay sending you the ECG monitor until after you have had the procedure.
- ask you if you have any holidays booked in the next two weeks. If you do, we will send the ECG monitor out after these dates.
- ask you if there is likely to be any problems delivering the ECG monitor to your home (for example, if you do not have a letterbox).
- ask you if you have any allergies, especially to plasters or adhesive (glue). If you have had a bad reaction to either of these before, it is important that you tell us during your telephone appointment. We will then decide whether it is safe for you to wear the ECG monitor.
- ask you if you have a cardiac rhythm management device fitted (for example, a pacemaker, ICD, S-ICD or LINQ device). This is to determine which ECG monitor we should give you.

## What will happen after the telephone appointment?

The external company providing the ambulatory ECG monitor may telephone you before they send you your monitor. This is so that they can check for their records that you are happy to receive the monitor and to confirm the information we have given them is correct. It is important that you answer this call. If the company cannot get hold of you, your results, and any treatment that may be needed due to the results, may be delayed.

## How do I use the ambulatory ECG monitor?

Your ambulatory ECG monitor will come with:

- instructions on how to fit, wear and return the monitor
- a paper symptom diary for you to record any symptoms or episodes that occur during the test (some companies may also provide details for an app that you can download to your smartphone to use to record your symptoms, if you so wish)
- contact details for the external company that has provided the monitor

# Patient information factsheet

It is important that you start wearing the ECG monitor as soon as you receive it and post it back as soon as possible after you remove it. This helps to avoid any delay to the results being available to your doctor. Please let us know if for any reason you cannot put the monitor on straight away or you do not use it.

## Attaching the patch or stickers

During your telephone appointment, we will explain how to prepare your chest with a special skin preparation to ensure the patch or stickers stick properly to your skin.

## Recording events

If you experience any symptoms during the test, press the event button on your ECG monitor to mark the time. This helps your doctor match up symptoms with your heart's activity.

If you have any questions about your ECG monitor at any point during the test, please telephone the external company for advice.

## How do I care for the ambulatory ECG monitor?

We will explain how to care for your ambulatory ECG monitor and answer any questions you may have during your telephone appointment. We have included the information below as a reminder.

### Daily activities

You can go about your normal daily routine, including work and light exercise. However, you should avoid any activities that cause excessive sweating or that get the ECG monitor wet (for example, swimming).

### Bathing and showering

ECG monitors are splash proof but should **not** be fully submerged in water.

If your patch or stickers are starting to peel off, contact the external company for advice using the details provided with your ECG monitor.

## How do I return the ambulatory ECG monitor?

We will advise how to return your ambulatory ECG monitor during your telephone appointment. If you have any questions about the return process, please don't hesitate to ask us during your appointment.

## When will I receive my results?

Your results will be sent to the doctor who requested you have the ambulatory ECG.

**If your general practitioner (GP)** requested you have the test, they will contact you to give you your results. If you have not heard anything after eight weeks, please contact your GP surgery.

**If your hospital consultant (doctor)** requested you have the test, they will either give you your results during your next clinic appointment or send your results directly to your GP. If you are unsure how to find out your results, please ask us during your telephone appointment.

# Patient information factsheet

## When should I seek medical help?

### Allergic reaction or irritated skin

An ambulatory ECG is a very safe test and side effects are rare.

It is normal for the skin around the patch or stickers to feel a bit itchy and sore. However, if you experience **severe** itching, redness or irritation, you should remove your ECG monitor.

If you have removed your ECG monitor early (before the agreed number of days), please return the monitor to the external company for analysis as soon as possible. Please can you also give us a call using the telephone number below to inform us about the issue so we can provide further instructions and address any concerns you may have. Your comfort and safety are our top priorities, so do not hesitate to contact us if you experience any reactions to the sticky patch or stickers.

## Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns or would like more information, please contact us.

Non-invasive cardiology department

Telephone: **023 8120 6404** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm)

## Useful links

For more information about having an ambulatory ECG, please visit our website:

[www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/blood-heart-and-circulation/non-invasive-cardiology](http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/blood-heart-and-circulation/non-invasive-cardiology)

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

Join our family of charity supporters with a monthly donation! It's a wonderful way to show your ongoing support of our patients and staff.

Scan the QR code or visit [southamptonhospitalscharity.org/donate](http://southamptonhospitalscharity.org/donate)



**Southampton  
Hospitals  
Charity**

Charity Registration Numbers 1051543

