

## Cardiology services

# Having an ECG

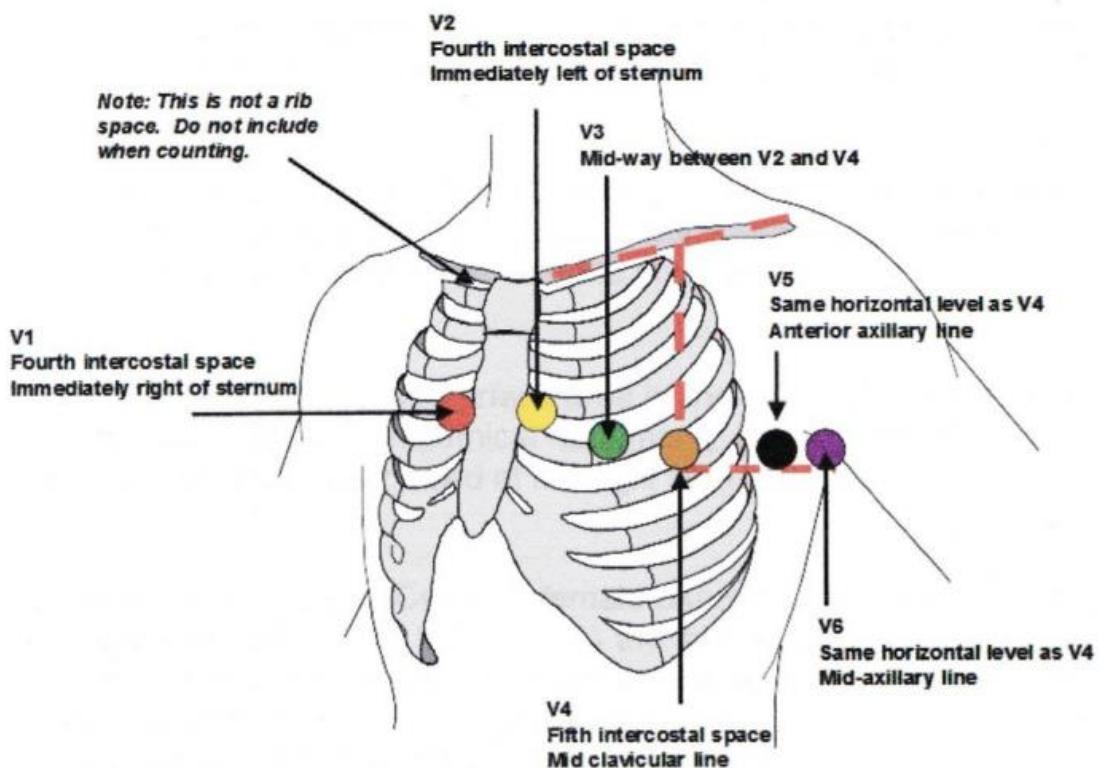
### Information for patients, relatives and carers

This leaflet explains what an electrocardiogram (ECG) is and what will happen at your appointment. If you have any questions, please ask your care team.

## What is an ECG?

An ECG is a non-invasive test that records the electrical activity of your heart through electrode stickers that are placed on your chest (figure 1), hands, and ankles. It is a quick and painless test.

### Standard ECG chest electrode positions



*Figure 1 – Standard ECG precordial electrode positions*

Campbell B, Richley D, Ross C, Eggett CJ. Clinical Guidelines by Consensus: Recording a standard 12-lead electrocardiogram. An approved method by The Professional Body for Cardiac Scientists (SCST) 2024. [www.scst.org.uk](http://www.scst.org.uk), accessed 2025

## Why do I need an ECG?

ECGs are performed for a wide range of reasons including palpitations, chest pain, dizziness, shortness of breath and pre/post-procedure. An ECG will be particularly helpful to find out if your symptoms are related to your heart or not.

# What I need to know before having an ECG?

## If you need a chaperone and/or an interpreter

If you need someone to come into your appointment with you (a chaperone), please tell the receptionist when you arrive for your appointment.

If you need an interpreter, please contact us on the number for your cardiac department (see below) 3 days before your appointment. We can then book an interpreter for your appointment.

## Plan your journey

Many people benefit from planning their journey to the hospital. Knowing your route can help you get there in plenty of time for your appointment. There are a small number of general and disabled car parking spaces at the different hospitals (except for St Mary's).

For help with journey planning or patient transport, please visit: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk) > [our location](#) > choose the correct hospital > hospital map > parking and [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk).

# How should I prepare for an ECG?

You can prepare for your appointment by:

- wearing a top that's easy to take on and off
- not using body lotions, oil or talcum powder on your skin before the test – these stop the electrodes sticking to your chest properly

Some people may need to have their chest shaved and cleaned before the test. You can shave or remove any hair from the chest area (if you prefer) on your own. If not, we can do this for you on the day of the appointment.

# What happens on the day of my appointment?

Please arrive 10 to 15 minutes before the time for your appointment and go to the cardiology reception desk.

## Charing Cross Hospital

- 020 3311 1028
- Cardiac Investigation Unit  
Fifth floor  
Charing Cross Hospital  
Fulham Palace Road  
London W6 8RF

## Hammersmith Hospital

- 020 3313 3951
- Cardiac Investigation Unit  
Hammersmith Hospital  
Ground floor, B block  
Du Cane Road

London W12 0HS

### St Mary's Hospital

- 020 3312 1241
- Waller cardiovascular unit  
Ground floor  
Mary Stanford Wing  
St Mary's Hospital  
Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

## The ECG fitting process

- the healthcare professional will take you to a room where they will explain how the test will be performed
- we'll offer you a gown, then ask you to step behind a screen and remove the top half of your clothing - you'll need to put the gown on so that it opens at the front (like a coat or dressing gown)
- then you'll lie or sit down on a bed or chair
- the healthcare professional will clean the skin on your chest in the place where the electrodes stickers will be attached, and shave if necessary
- the healthcare professional will then attach the electrodes stickers to your arms, legs and chest - these are attached to the ECG machine
- you will need to relax and lie still for a few minutes while the ECG machine records the electrical signals that are created when your heart beats
- once the test is complete, the healthcare professional will remove the electrode stickers from your skin – you might feel some very slight discomfort when the patches are removed from your skin, a bit like removing a plaster

## How do I give feedback?

We want to hear your **suggestions** or **comments**. Your feedback helps us provide the best service. You can always speak to a member of staff.

You can also contact the **patient advice and liaison service (PALS)** on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 to 16.00, Monday to Friday excluding bank holidays) or email at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net). The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or questions and they can help solve problems.

You can make a complaint by ringing **020 3312 1337 / 1349** or emailing [ICHComplaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHComplaints@nhs.net). The address is Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY.

# Other ways to read this leaflet

Please email us at [imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net) if you need this leaflet in a different format. This could be large print, Easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in a different language.

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