

Holter Monitor Test

What is a Holter monitor?

A **Holter monitor** is a device that records your heart's activity for 24 to 48 hours, while you go about your daily life.

A Holter monitor has a digital recorder, about the size of a large pack of cards. The recorder is connected by wires to 5 to 7 **electrodes** — small, sticky patches that sense the electrical activity of your heart. While you're wearing the Holter monitor, you'll keep a diary noting times when you feel heart symptoms.

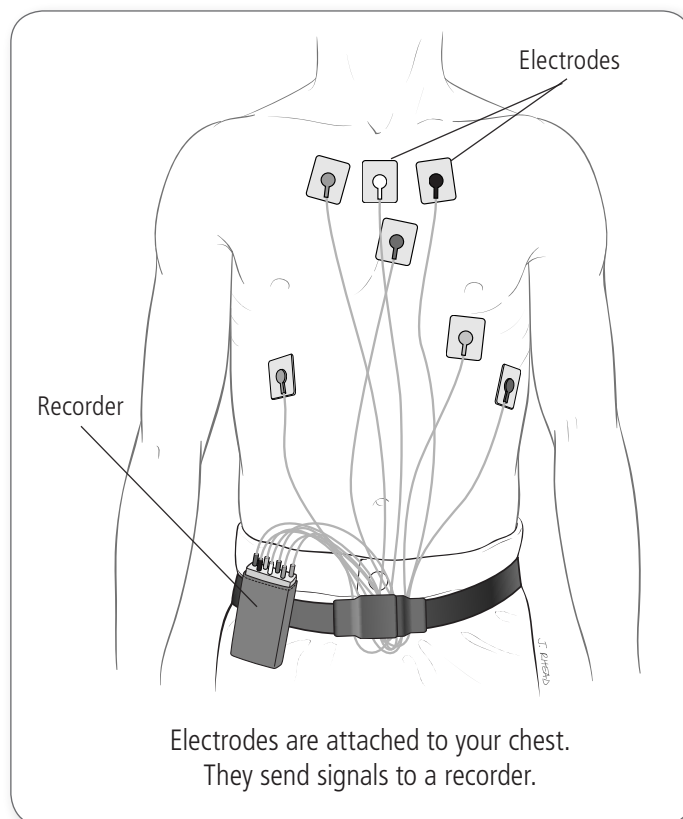
Why do I need a Holter monitor test?

Your doctor might recommend a Holter monitor test if you faint, have periods of dizziness, or if you sometimes feel your heart pounding, racing, or beating unevenly.

A Holter monitor test gives your doctor a beat-by-beat record of your heart's rhythm for a long period of time. Comparing your diary to the Holter recording will help your doctor diagnose heart rhythm problems that may be causing your symptoms.

What happens before a Holter monitor test?

- **Your doctor may do other tests**, such as an electrocardiogram (EKG).
- **A healthcare provider will prepare the skin on your chest and attach the electrodes.** The healthcare provider will clean the skin and, if necessary, clip the hair. Then the electrodes will be attached to your chest. It's important for the electrodes to have a good connection with your skin, so a special gel or paste might be applied to your skin before the electrodes are attached.
- **A healthcare provider will give you the recorder.** The electrodes will be attached to the recorder with wires. You'll get a pouch so you can wear the recorder around your neck or over your shoulder. You'll also get a diary to note your symptoms.



What should I do while wearing the Holter monitor?

The Holter monitor works automatically, but you will need to avoid anything that would interfere with the signal it records. You will also need to note information about your symptoms.

- **Keep the electrodes, wires, and recorder from getting wet.** Don't swim, take a bath, or shower while wearing the Holter monitor. If you use a washcloth, avoid your chest.
- **Follow your doctor's directions about activity.** Your doctor may tell you to adjust your exercise level during the time you wear the monitor. If you exercise, do it in a cool location to avoid sweating too much. Too much moisture can loosen the connection between the electrodes and your skin.

- **If you have a symptom, press the event button, stop what you're doing, and write the symptom down.** If you faint, feel dizzy, or feel anything unusual with your heart, stop what you're doing. This helps to keep your movements from jarring the electrodes. Then write down the time and describe the symptom in the diary you were given. It is important to make sure your doctor can compare the heart rhythm recording with your symptoms.
- **As directed by your doctor, record other information in the diary.** You may want to record medication you take (the time and the dose), times you feel stress, or periods of exercise.
- **Avoid items that can interfere with the monitor's signal.** Because the Holter monitor is a piece of electrical equipment, it can be affected by magnets, electronic devices, and high-voltage electricity. These include:
 - **Metal detectors.** Walk at a normal pace through the detector.
 - **High-voltage electricity and powerful magnets.** Stay away from high-voltage lines if you can.
 - **Electric blankets, toothbrushes, and razors.** Avoid using these while you're wearing the Holter monitor.

- **MP3 players and cell phones.** If your MP3 player or cell phone is on, keep it at least 6 inches away from your chest.
- **Please do not tamper** with the recorder, electrodes, batteries, or wires. If you do, the test may need to be repeated, resulting in additional charges to you. **If one of the electrodes becomes loose, call the testing center immediately.**

What happens at the end of the test?

When you've worn the Holter monitor for the amount of time your doctor directs, you'll return the Holter monitor and the diary. **The diary is an important part of the test** — please return it with the monitor.

Your doctor will analyze the data from the monitor and diary, and will discuss the results during a follow-up appointment. **Depending on why you're having the test, the results can show:**

- The cause of your heart rhythm problem, and whether it is serious enough to require treatment
- Whether heart rhythm treatment is working
- Whether your heart rhythm indicates that your heart isn't getting enough oxygen, a condition called **ischemia**.

Talking with your healthcare providers about the Holter monitor test

The table below lists the most common potential benefits, risks, and alternatives for a Holter monitor test. Other benefits and risks may apply in your unique medical situation. Talking with your healthcare providers is the most important part of learning about the risks and benefits. If you have questions, be sure to ask.

| Potential benefits | Risks and potential complications | Alternatives |
|---|--|--|
| A Holter monitor can help your doctor diagnose heart rhythm problems and monitor treatment results. | Wearing a Holter monitor poses practically no risk. Some people can have minor skin irritation from the sticky patches on the chest. If gel or paste is used to attach the electrodes, in rare cases it can cause an allergic reaction. | Other heart rhythm tests include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EKG (electrocardiogram) • Cardiac event monitoring • Cardiac stress test • Electrophysiology (EP) study |