

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

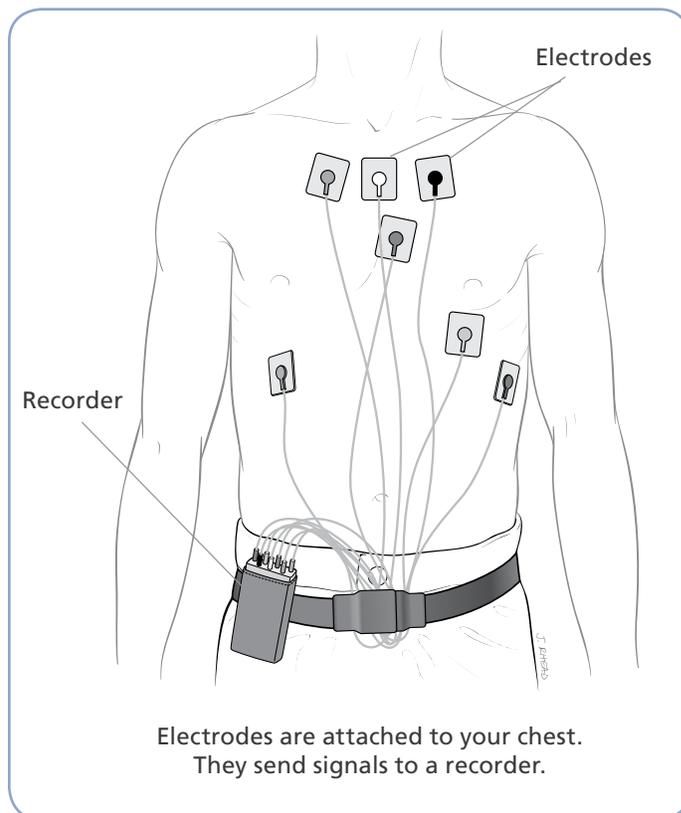
Why do I need a Holter monitor test?

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 the test?

- **Your doctor may do other tests** such as an electrocardiogram (ECG).
- **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 any hair before attaching the electrodes. Since it's important for the electrodes to have a good connection with your skin, a special gel or paste might be applied to your skin to improve the connection.
- **A healthcare provider will give you the recorder.** The electrodes will be attached to the recorder with wires. You'll get a pouch (for wearing the recorder around your neck or over your shoulder) and a diary for noting 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. Exercise in a cool location to avoid excess sweating — 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 feel faint, dizzy, or anything unusual with your heart, stop what you're doing to keep your movements from jarring the electrodes. In your diary, record the time and describe the symptom you experienced to help your doctor compare the heart rhythm recording with your symptoms.
- **Your doctor may ask you to record other information in the diary** such as the medicine you take (the time and the dose), times you feel stress, or periods of exercise.
- Because the Holter monitor is a piece of electrical equipment, you will need to **avoid items that can interfere with the monitor's signal** including:
 - **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 expense for you. If one of the electrodes becomes loose, call the testing center immediately.

Questions for my doctor:

What happens at the end of the test?

When you've worn the Holter monitor for the length of time your doctor directs, **you will need to return it AND the diary.** Your doctor will analyze the data from the monitor and diary and then discuss the results during a follow-up appointment. **Depending on why you're having the test, the results can tell you and your doctor:**

- What's causing your heart rhythm problem and whether or not it requires treatment
- If your heart rhythm treatment is working
- If you have a condition called **ischemia** [iss-KEE-me-uh], which happens when your heart isn't getting enough oxygen

What are the risks and benefits?

The table below lists the most common potential benefits, risks, and alternatives for a Holter monitor test. Talk with your healthcare providers about benefits and risks that may apply to your unique medical situation. If you have questions, be sure to ask.

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

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