

ECG and Telemetry Patient Monitoring

An electrical impulse causes your heart to beat. A normal heart beat has a regular pattern and beats between 60 and 100 times per minute for an adult. To watch for changes in your heart beat, a machine called an electrocardiogram (ECG) is used to view a drawing of your heart beats. Wires that stick to your chest send the electrical impulses to the machine. This process is called telemetry.

The small battery pack you carry connects to five stickers (electrodes) on your chest. These sense your heart beat and send the ECG by radio waves to the computer at the nurses' station. Telemetry allows your doctors and nurses to watch your ECG for 24 hours a day. It alarms for abnormal heart beats, which are called "arrhythmias."

Be sure to tell your nurse any time you have chest pain, feel fast heart beats (palpitations), or feel dizzy, faint or short of breath.

You can move around in your room and in the hallway when your nurse tells you it is okay. You need to check with your nurse to see if you are allowed to leave the area. If you get too far away, it may not be possible for your heart to be monitored if the ECG signal is lost.

Check with your nurse to see if it is okay for you to shower. Do not shower with the battery pack on. Be sure to tell your nurse if you need to take the electrodes or wires off.

Avoid talking on a cell phone while on telemetry. Cell phone signals can get in the way of the ECG signal. Let your doctor or nurse know if you have questions.