

## **Information about an Electrocardiogram (ECG)**

### **What is an Electrocardiogram (ECG)?**

An electrocardiogram (ECG-heart trace) is a recording of your heart beat. It is the most common test carried out to help your doctor decide if there is a possible heart problem and, if so how to treat it. It is a simple test that will cause you no pain and has no side effects. This test will only take 10 minutes.

### **Why is it done?**

ECG's are carried out for many reasons. Your doctor may already have told you why they would like you to have it done. Below are some reasons for having an ECG:

- To help find out what is causing you to have chest pain
- To know more about your heart rhythm
- If your doctor has heard a heart murmur
- If your blood pressure is higher than normal

### **How is it done?**

Before you come for the ECG, please DO NOT use body cream, lotion or talc.

The physiologist (technician) will ask you to undress from the waist up and you will be given a gown. Females will have to take off their tights.

- You will then be asked to lie down on a couch
- Your skin will be rubbed so that the electrodes (wires and pads) make good contact with your skin
- Electrodes are positioned on the chest, wrists and ankles and a recording is made

This shows what is happening in different areas of the heart.

### **How does it work?**

The heart beats by producing impulses. The impulses travel through the heart, muscles and tissues of the body and arrive on the surface of the skin. It is from the skin that we are able to pick up these impulses and by using a cardiograph machine, record it on paper.

If you have any questions about the test please ask the physiologist – they will be happy to help you. The results will be sent to the doctor who referred you for the test.