

PRESS RELEASE

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Understanding Electrocardiograms

As part of American Heart Month, Los Alamitos Medical Center wants you to know about the different heart services and tests offered at the hospital. One common test is an EKG. An electrocardiogram or EKG provides doctors with a simple test that records the electrical activity of the heart. The test may help detect and locate the source of problems within the heart.

Your heart works by contracting certain sections of the heart muscle in a certain order. This contraction forces blood to move within the heart's chambers. An electrical signal tells the different sections when to contract and when to rest. An EKG detects and records this signal as it travels across the heart.

An EKG may uncover a number of problems with the heart including:

- Heart attack
- Reduced blood flow to the heart muscle
- Irregular heart beats
- Problems with the heart not beating forcefully enough
- Enlargement of the heart
- Birth defects
- Diseases of the heart's valves

The EKG recording not only shows what the heart is doing at the time of the test, it also indicates problems in the past such as a previous heart attack. A previous EKG can be used as comparison to help detect problems.

Why do I need an EKG?

An EKG helps evaluate signs and symptoms that indicate heart problems. Patients who are experiencing chest pain, difficulty breathing, extreme fatigue or unusual heart sounds that are found during an exam, may need an EKG. If you report that your heart has been pounding, racing, fluttering or seems to beat unevenly, then your doctor may order an EKG.

Adults may need to have a baseline EKG once they reach their 40s. Anyone with a close family history of heart disease (father, mother or sibling), also may need to have EKGs to help detect heart disease in earlier, more treatable stages. Your doctor may schedule you for an EKG before a surgical procedure.

How is an EKG performed?

An EKG is a simple and painless test. A technician attaches 12 sticky patches to different points on your chest, arms and legs. A wire will be fasten to the patch and will feed information into the EKG machine.

Once the wires or leads are connected, you'll be asked to lie quietly on a table while the EKG machine records the electrical activity of your heart. The machine will print out a tracing of each lead's activity on special graph paper. A physician will review the printout and interpret the results.

The entire test takes about 10 minutes.

Los Alamitos Medical Center is a Designated Cardiovascular Receiving Center; Joint Commission certified Coronary Artery Disease Center, American Heart Association Get With the Guidelines Silver Performance Achievement Award for Heart Failure, American Heart Association Get With the Guidelines Silver Performance Achievement Award for Acute Myocardial Infarction, and earned a CIGNA Quality Designation for Heart Failure. For more information about the hospital's heart services, call 800-549-5559.

ABOUT LOS ALAMITOS MEDICAL CENTER

Opened in 1968, Los Alamitos Medical Center is a 167-bed acute care hospital located at 3751 Katella Ave in Los Alamitos. The medical center offers a wide range of programs for families and seniors. Medical services include a 24-hour emergency department, Birthing Center; cardiology, including a cardiac catheterization/angiography suite; oncology; respiratory; an on-site laboratory; MRI and open MRI; CT Scan; PET Scan; physical therapy; secured geropsychiatry unit, and others, in addition to educational lectures and support groups. The hospital is part of an integrated medical campus that includes three medical office buildings and the TotalCare Pavilion. The TotalCare Pavilion is home to the new \$10 million TotalCare Cancer Center and TotalCare Infusion Center and also has the TotalCare Imaging Center. A Health Care Center located within the Seal Beach Leisure World community is part of the campus too. The hospital is fully accredited by the Joint Commission, the nation's oldest and largest hospital accreditation agency.

Designated Cardiovascular Receiving Center; Joint Commission certified Primary Stroke Center; Joint Commission certified Coronary Artery Disease Center, American Heart Association Get With the Guidelines Silver Performance Achievement Award for Stroke, American Heart Association Get With the Guidelines Silver Performance Achievement Award for Heart Failure, American Heart Association Get With the Guidelines Silver Performance Achievement Award for Acute Myocardial Infarction, four-time recipient of TENET Healthcare Corporation's Circle of Excellence Award; Institute for Healthcare Improvement's (IHI)100,000 Lives and IHI's 5 Million Lives campaign participant; Cancer Program Accredited by the American College of Surgeons; fully accredited by The Joint Commission; Unitedhealth Premium® Specialty Center for Interventional Cardiology, CIGNA Quality Designation for Colon Surgery, Heart Failure, and Stroke; CIGNA Center of Excellence for Caesarean Section and Vaginal Delivery

To learn more about Los Alamitos Medical Center, visit www.losalamitosmedctr.com.

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