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HOLTER MONITOR

A 'Holter monitor' is a continuous tape recording of a patient's ECG for 24 hours. It is worn during regular daily activities under regular clothing.

It helps your cardiologist compare symptoms of dizziness, palpitations or black outs with data gathered on the heart. Holter monitoring is used to detect an abnormal heart rhythm.

Preparing for the Procedure – What do you need to do?

The only requirement is that the patient wear loose-fitting clothes. Buttons down the front of a shirt or blouse is preferable. This makes it convenient to apply the ECG electrodes, and also comfortably carry the monitor in a relatively discreet manner.

Procedure – What happens?

The chest is cleansed with an alcohol solution to ensure good attachment of the sticky ECG electrodes. Men with hairy chests may require small areas to be shaved.

The electrodes (circular white patches) are applied to various points of the chest. Thin wires are then used to connect the electrodes to a small recorder. The tape recorder is slung over the shoulder and neck. The recorder is worn for 24 hours and you are encouraged to continue your daily activities.

You will not be able to shower whilst wearing the monitor. You will need to record your daily activity in a diary noting times of events such as 'dance class' or 'fight with husband'. You should also record any symptoms you may experience such as skipped heartbeats, chest discomfort, shortness of breath and dizziness.

The Holter monitor has an internal clock which stamps the time on the ECG recording. These can be used to correlate the heart rhythm with symptoms or complaints. After 24 hours, the Holter monitor needs to be returned. This can be removed by the staff.

How long does it take? It takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes to apply the monitor and less than 5 minutes to remove it. The patient will also receive directions. Some monitors are also equipped with an "event" button. You may press this button during a symptom (faintness, palpitations).

Possible Complications And Risk

Holter monitoring is extremely safe and no different than carrying around a small tape recorder for 24 hours.

Follow-up Care

You will be asked to make an appointment for a short revisit with your cardiologist so that he can go through the outcomes of the test with you. A letter will be sent to your GP highlighting the outcomes of the test. www.christopherflood.com.au